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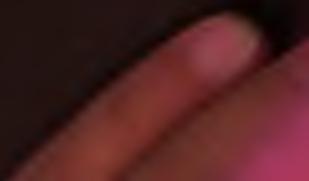
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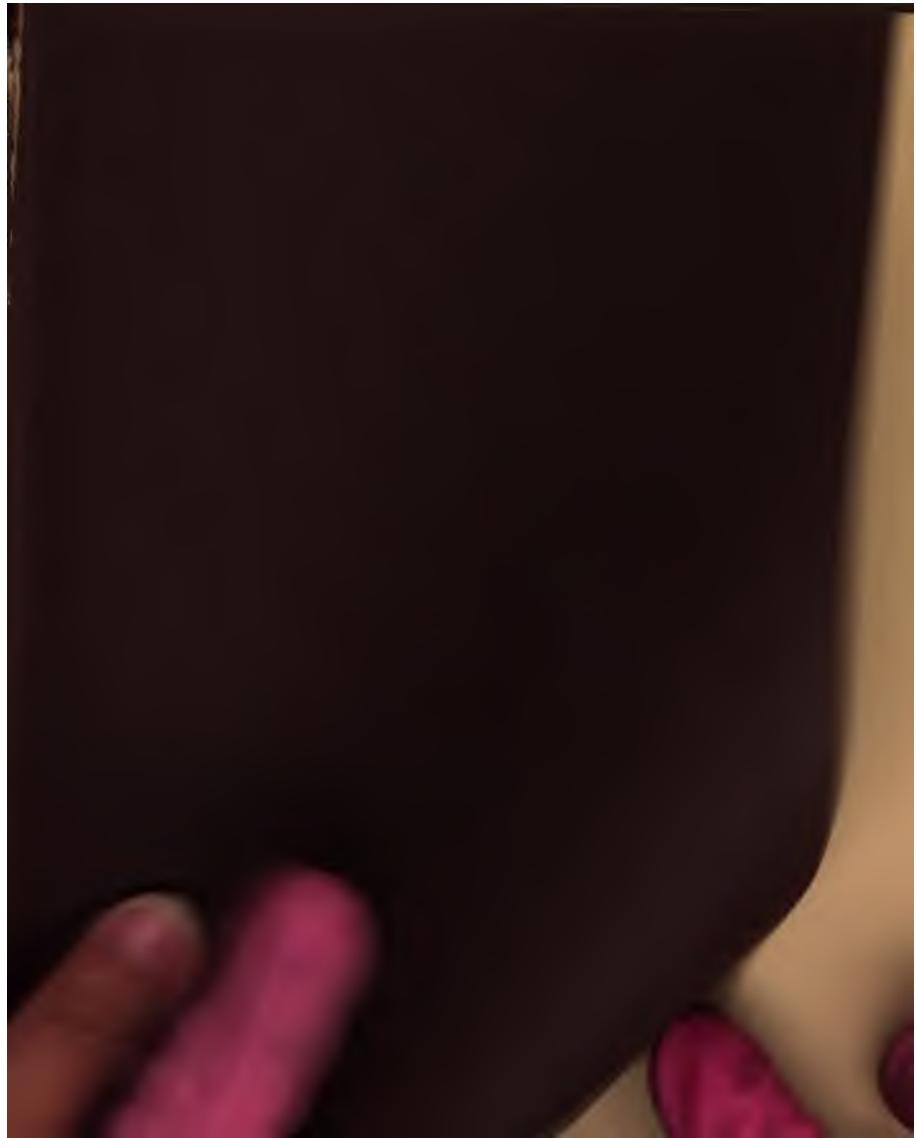
# THE CHRISTMAS HAMPER.



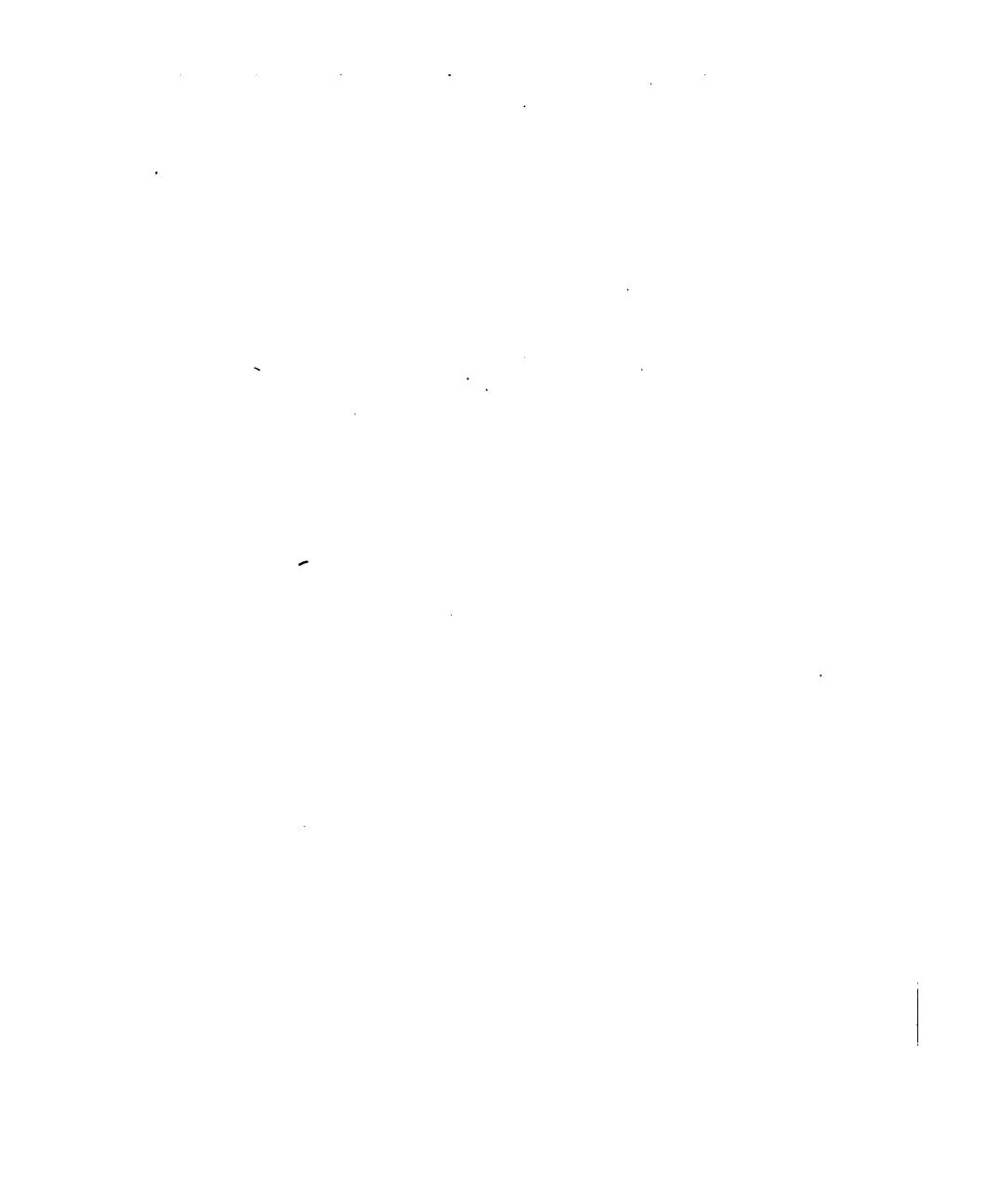


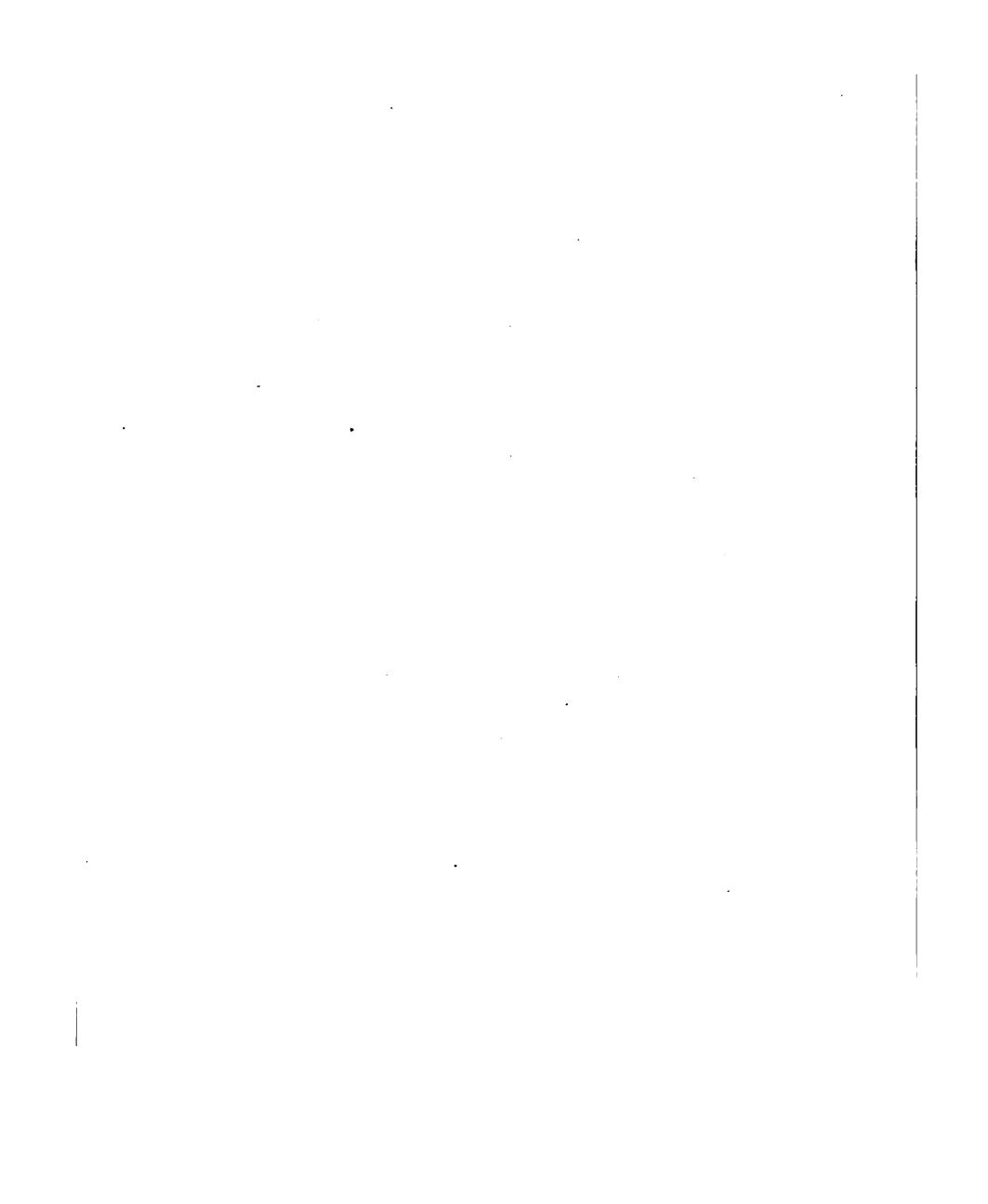
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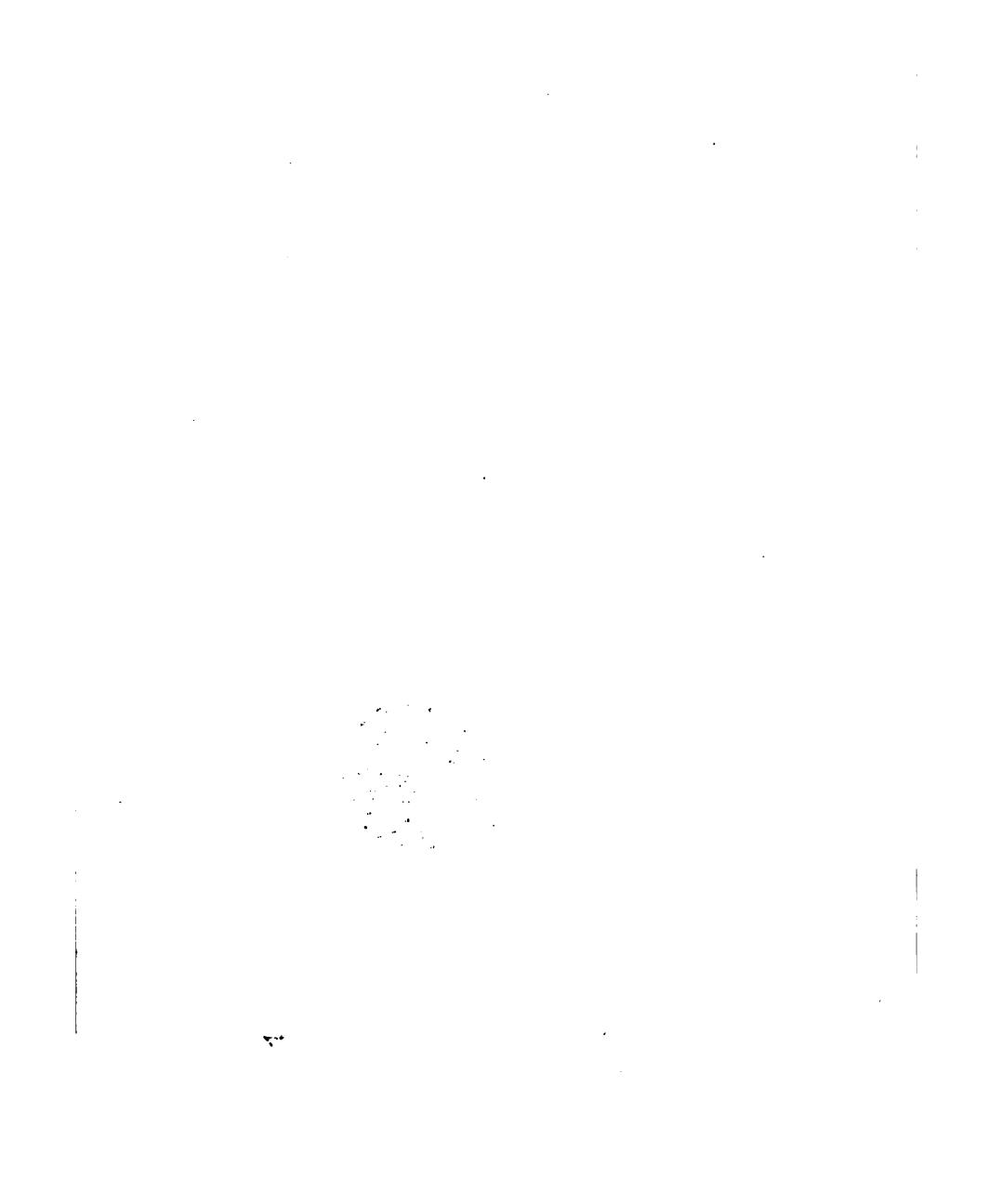








## **THE CHRISTMAS HAMPER.**



THE  
CHRISTMAS HAMPER.

A TALE

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN GRACES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
'ETHEL WOODVILLE,' 'PLEASANT SUNDAYS WITH MY CHILDREN,' ETC.



LONDON:  
HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY.  
1872.

250 . 9 . 294.

LONDON:

Printed by JOHN STRANGEWAYS, Castle St. Leicester Sq.

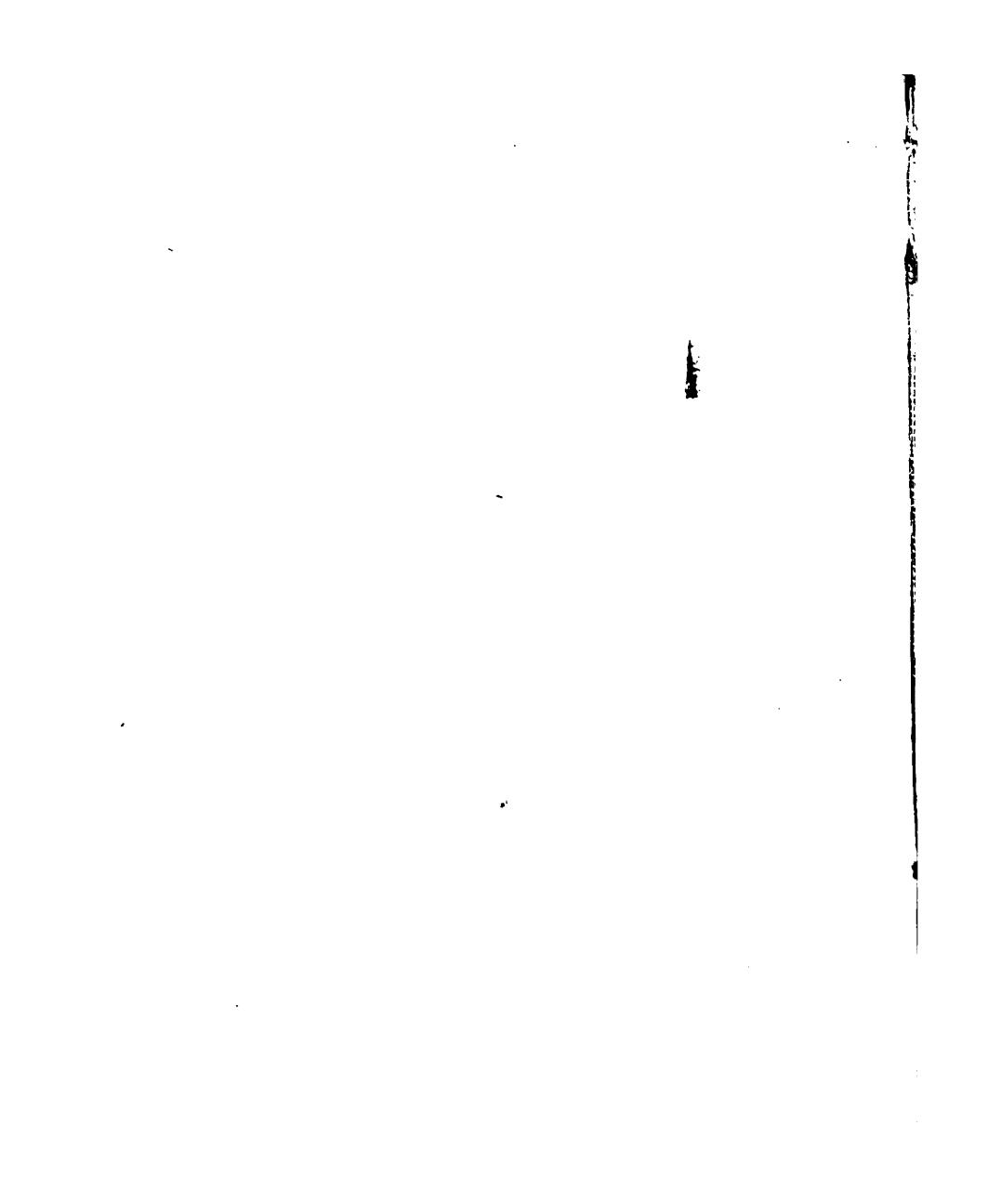
WRITTEN FOR, AND DEDICATED WITH KIND LOVE TO,

MY YOUNGEST DAUGHTER,

G. I. HOPE HOLLINGS,

AND TO MY NIECE AND GOD-CHILD,

L. A. HOPE JEFFERY.



# THE CHRISTMAS HAMPER.

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## CHAPTER I.

'Wherever in the world I am,  
In whatsoe'er estate,  
I have a fellowship of hearts,  
To keep and cultivate ;  
And a work of lowly love to do,  
For the Lord on whom I wait.'

THERE have been many beautiful stories written lately, especially for children, but I have generally found that they tell us of those who lived in the great city of London, among its dingy streets and crowded alleys; and it seems to me, as if we were in danger of forgetting how many other places there are, where poor, uncared-

for beings may be found as well as in our largest town in England.

The story, however, that I am going to tell you, will take you far away from mighty London, with its cathedrals, palaces, museums, parks, grand sights and shops, with its noble river and its many bridges. Away also from the vast crowds of wretched human beings, who have either no home there, or who live in the close back courts and slums, who grow up as they can, caring little for this life, and knowing nothing of the world to come.

You must go with me to England's largest county—Yorkshire. It is so large that it has been divided into three parts, called 'Ridings'—North, East, and West. In the last-named there are many very large manufacturing towns, where such goods as cloth, merinoes, alpaccas, and coburgs are made in the mills. Here, day by day, thousands of men and women, and children of a certain age, work amid the roar of the machinery, and the smell of oil, in a close hot air, very trying to those who are not accustomed to it.

But it is not much that my story has to do with mills; though, perhaps, at some future time, I may have to tell

you of some people I knew who worked all the best years of their lives in these places. The house, however, where the people lived whom I am going to write about, was very close to a large mill; it was a good-sized house, in the middle of a large smoky town, which I will call Harden. It was placed at the bottom of a hill where three streets met, and so of course was in a very noisy position. Nevertheless it was not an unpleasant house, for it stood back from the road, and had a piece of garden in front, or rather what was intended for a garden, for few flowers could grow there. The tall mill chimneys, all round it, poured forth their smoke day by day, and the thousands of blacks falling on the ground prevented even shrubs from being healthy. Always, however, in spring-time a few daring yellow crocuses ventured to show their bright heads; and some small dirty-looking snow-drops, robbed of nearly all their purity and whiteness, did their little work on earth by showing that the spring-time was coming, though all looked outwardly so black and dreary in 'the busy town. There was a nicely flagged walk to the front door of the house, the handle of which always shone as bright as gold, proving that whoever lived there had servants who were mindful to make all

look as clean and cheerful as they could. The door opened into a spacious passage, on each side of which were a drawing-room and dining-room. These rooms were very well furnished, but there were not many ornaments in them, save some valuable pictures on the walls, clocks on the mantel-pieces, and many handsomely bound books. There were no ladies' workboxes, cabinets, or musical instruments in the rooms. For many a long year there had been no ladies' presence in that house at all; the owner dwelt alone, except with his two faithful servants. The gentleman's name was Ramsden, and the mill at the back of the house belonged to him. He spent several hours in his counting-house every day, then, after a visit to the news-room and exchange, he returned to spend the remainder of the day at home. His favourite arm-chair, his books, his papers, and writing materials, were always sure to be in the same place, for no one ever came to disturb them. For many years Mr. Ramsden had been an invalid, and gradually bad sight and hearing had come upon him. He could no longer hear the birds' sweet singing, or see with pleasant clearness the lovely colours of the flowers, or the distant views of scenery when he went into the country, and so

he grew to care less and less each year for leaving home and taking a holiday. He found his greatest pleasure in reading what many people would call hard dry books, which he could see with the aid of powerful spectacles. He was a lonely old man. He had no wife, nor child, nor sister, nor brother left. All his near relations were dead, and, since his mother and sister died many years before my story begins, he had not encouraged the visits of his remaining kinsfolk. Perhaps he did not feel his loneliness, at all events, he never *said* he did, for he was a man of few words, and people often thought him cold and selfish, when in reality the kindness of his heart was not brought out because no strong call had been made on his affections. He was rich, but he did not care for the money when he had made it. He was by no means ungenerous, but he hated to see his name in print, and therefore was often called covetous. Yet not a few people had been largely helped forward in the world by Mr. Ramsden's money, though he generally contrived that those to whom he gave should not know their benefactor.

He had one old friend ; to him he still clung, even in the winter of his life, and he never failed to leave his home and spend the Christmas away from Harden with

this gentleman, and some months after the same friend came to return the visit. Beyond this of late the old man very seldom left home.

Mr. Ramsden had two faithful servants who had lived with him more than twenty years. John and Martha Benson were not only honest, steady people, but they lived in the love and fear of God, and they therefore served their master as in God's sight. Mr. Ramsden left everything in their charge; and though John always brought the monthly accounts to him regularly, he seldom took the trouble to look at them. So long as Martha cooked his dinner to his satisfaction, and kept the rooms clean, while John waited upon him when he required him, and was punctual to a minute, Mr. Ramsden was quite satisfied.

John and Martha had been married many years, but as they had no children none of the household arrangements were altered after their marriage. They were not now young, and sometimes they were glad to avail themselves of the assistance of an old charwoman in their kitchen work, but never would Martha give up her special privilege of keeping Mr. Ramsden's sitting-room and bedroom in order herself. The front-rooms

and kitchen premises were divided by a heavy door covered with green baize which swung to on its hinges when not propped open, and no sound ever penetrated from the kitchen into what Martha called 'the Master's premises.'

## CHAPTER II.

“ Feed my lambs,” 'twas kindly spoken,  
    ‘Twas a legacy of love !  
Still His followers kept the token  
    Of their Saviour passed above.

While there beats one heart possessing  
    Holy love and heavenly fear,  
We may rest secure in blessing,  
    We shall find a shepherd here.’

EDMESTON.

IT was one Christmas Eve long, long ago, when a strange event happened to John and Martha. Mr. Ramsden had left home that morning for his annual visit to his friend, and the two servants, having early closed the shutters and fastened the doors, sat down to talk over the preparations for best distributing Mr. Ramsden’s Christmas gifts among the poor. At nine o’clock they proposed going to bed, knowing at what an early hour they would be roused from sleep by the

Christmas singers. I should here tell those of you who may not understand Yorkshire customs, that in towns like Harden, parties of singers will come as early as three o'clock on Christmas morning to sing under the windows of gentlemen's houses, and expect in return that some one will leave their warm bed and throw them out money; and as the light begins to dawn, hundreds of children, both girls and boys come, half-a-dozen perhaps together, striving with their little harsh, discordant voices to sing, 'While shepherds watched their flocks by night,' 'Christians, awake,' or other Christmas hymns, and this continues until the church-bells ring for morning service. How well I remember, when I was a little child, the eagerness with which I and my brothers and sisters looked forward to having our little baskets of half-pence to give to the singers; and what a vigilant watch we kept over the children who came, to see that they did not deceive us by coming twice,—a trick which they not unfrequently tried to play until they found we were as sharp as they were.

John and Martha had two basins filled with half-pence ready for the children next morning, and some little parcels of silver coins for especially good singers, and a

five-shilling piece for the choir boys of their church, who were sure in the afternoon to pay them a visit. They were as pleased themselves to give the money as the singers were to receive it; and no matter how harsh the voices all were sure to have a kind word and smile from the good couple. Before they went to bed they had a custom they never omitted, John always read aloud a chapter in the Bible which had been presented to them by their pastor when they were married, and after the chapter they read a hymn too, from their own church hymn-book.

To-night the marker was placed at the 1 Cor. xiii., and slowly and distinctly John read those beautiful words on Christian charity written by St. Paul. Martha put down her knitting, clasped her hands, and closed her eyes while John read; and when he came to the last verse she repeated it with him: 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.' John closed the Bible and reached down the hymn-book and read,—

'Saviour, breathe an evening blessing  
Ere repose our spirits seal;  
Sin and want we come confessing,  
Thou canst save, and Thou canst heal;

Though destruction walk around us,  
Though the arrow past us fly,  
Angel-guards from Thee surround us,  
We are safe, if Thou art nigh.

Though the night be dark and dreary,  
Darkness cannot hide from Thee;  
Thou art He who, never weary,  
Watches where Thy people be.  
Should swift death this night o'ertake us,  
And our couch become our tomb,  
May the morn in heaven awake us,  
Clad in bright and deathless bloom.'

John had just finished the concluding words, when both he and his wife were startled by a loud ringing at the front door-bell.

'What can that be at this time o' night, think you, John?' exclaimed Martha.

'Mebbe some mischievous lad a ringing for a spree to fright us,' replied John, as he lighted a candle. Martha followed him to the front door. 'Who's there?' inquired John cautiously, before he undid the bolt.

'I've brought a hamper for ye,' replied a boy's rough voice. As John opened the door he saw a large hamper on the step, and a ragged-looking boy, about twelve years old, standing by it.

'Who's sent it?' said John.

'Nay, I dunno. A woman gie it me a few minutes ago and two-pence to bring it here, and be right sharp,' replied the boy.

John stooped and read the direction,—'Mr. John Benson, Ramsden House. With great care,' was written in plain but bad writing.

'Here's a Christmas-box for ye, then,' said John, pulling a sixpence from his pocket, and giving it to the boy.

'Thank ye,' replied the lad roughly, and without saying 'Good-night,' he started off, and they heard his clogs clattering far away down the street before they had recovered from their surprise.

'Come, John. Bring t' hamper into t' kitchen, and let's see who's sended us a Christmas-box,' said Martha at last. John fastened the door, and then carried the hamper into the cheerful kitchen, radiant in gas and fire-light. The hamper was but loosely tied together with bits of old string, and was soon undone. Some old rags were laid on the top, lifting which, the contents were revealed to Mr. and Mrs. Benson's astonished gaze. There lay two tiny living babies, fast asleep, a head on

each side the hamper, their little faces looking sweet and placid, though very small and thin.

‘Good Lord, what is this?’ exclaimed Martha, awe-struck. John’s face grew pale and bewildered.

‘What mun we do? Oh, dear, what mun we do?’ exclaimed Martha.

‘Eh! but I don’t know, my lass. I mun find t’ lad as brought um if I can,’ said John, getting his hat down. Just then one of the babies moved its little arm up as if to stretch itself. So pretty, but so thin did it seem, probably from starvation, that down went John’s hat, while he and Martha stooped over the unconscious babies, and Martha tenderly raised the one whose arm was uncovered in her arms.

‘Eh! but it be bonny, John. It’s mony a long year sin I had a baby in my arms.’ John looked gravely down at the other little one sleeping in the hamper.

‘Like enough they be some poor woman’s childer as has no home over her head. Poor little things! But, Martha, it’s out o’ all reason. We can’t keep um; we mun send um to t’ workhouse.’ said John.

‘Stop a bit!—Here’s summut pinned to this here baby’s bit o’ night-gown,’ said Martha, carefully unfastening a

dirty envelope and bringing out a long letter. John sat down to read the letter, which, though badly written and spelt, he made out thus :—

'KIND FOLKS,—Ye don't know me, but mony's the time I've seen ye from t' mill windows when I worked there, and I've seen ye kind to poor folks, especially chil-der. And many's the bit o' bread ye've given to them as was pining wi' hunger. I am nearly heart-broke, and if ye won't help me, I don't know what I'll do, the Lord only knows. Tom—him as I am wed to—he left me six week ago when my babbies was born, and until yesterday I heard naught on him. He has behaved very bad to me all along, and I've been nigh starved to death oftens. Last night I got a bit o' a note from Tom, and he say he's at Portsmouth, and he's going to Australy, and if I've a mind to come to him now I may go wi' him, but I mun find a home for the babbies ; he won't have um, he says. Kind folk, I am tore almost in two to know what to do. I love my babbies, poor 'elpless things, and for their own father to turn agin them is a awful thing. I mind me I promised when I wed to take Tom for better for worser, and I think as 'ow it means I ought to foller him first,

and try to break him of his bad ways, and mebbe if I leave the babbies and goes to him he'll see I loves him still, and be kinder to me. I don't want my babbies to go to t' Bastile,\* and I thought I would send um to you, and God turn your hearts to t' lile† things. I were a better lass once, and went to Sunday-school, and I had a Bible, and somewhere it said, "When the father and mother forsook, the Lord would take up,"—I can't mind the right words. But if I leaves my babbies, I will pray the Lord to 'cline your hearts to take care o' them. My heart is so sore I can hardly write, but I will send you money for the keep if ever I get it in Australy; and if I cannot, I will pray God night and day to bless and award you. I have given the lile things a drop of stuff to make um sleep sound for some hours, so they won't wake just for a bit. The babbies has not got any names yet. I could like them to be kestenned,‡ if ye would take um to the church. As ye hope for mercy for yerselves, do, kind folks, take care of my babbies, and may God in heaven bless ye.

## FROM A POOR HEART-BROKE WOMAN.

\* Yorkshire name for workhouse.

+ Little.

† Yorkshire word among the poor for 'christened,' generally meaning 'baptized.'

John and Martha sat in terrible perplexity after reading this letter, not knowing what to do. By-and-by the babies showed signs of waking, and, after stretching their little limbs, suddenly began to cry. John was sadly frightened; but all Martha's motherly nature was roused, and she hushed them gently in their singular bed, while she called to John to bring her the milk which had been set on one side for the cat, and some warm water. Kneeling down, she fed each little baby in turn with a spoonful of the warm food; and the evident relish they showed for it proved how much they wanted proper nourishment. When they had had what Martha considered sufficient for the present, she lifted the poor twins from the hamper to nurse them and look at them further. The larger and stronger of the two was a boy, the other mite of a baby was a girl—both very, very thin; but now that their eyes were open they seemed intelligent and healthy for six weeks old. They enjoyed the warm fire evidently, and spread out their little naked toes to meet the warmth they felt.

‘Eh! but they be bonny!’ Martha said two or three times before John spoke.

‘So they be,’ he said at last; ‘but I’ve been thinking

what we must do with um. We could never keep um here, you know; but that poor creature's letter goes to my heart, and I couldn't fashion to send um to t' work-house. We've saved a nice bit o'money between us, Martha. What say, shall we put um out to nurse to some kind body, and pay her well for taking care on um? and mebbe by-bye we'se hear somethink of t' poor mother.'

'Eh, John, honey! But my heart like feels sore to part wi' um at all, poor little things! See how their bits o' fingers close on mine, and seem like to say, "Don't send us away!" Surely, John, wi' old Betty to help us, we might manage it.'

John shook his head.

'Quite *unpossible*, my lass. Thou must be daft to think o' such a thing. Whatever would our master say?'

'But why need we tell him for a bit? and when he knewed we'd had um some time, and he never heard um, he'd not mind. As for the sup o'milk they drank, and their bits o' clothes, in course we should pay for um ourselves; and as for nursing on um, why I'd do it night and day, bless um!' exclaimed Martha, raising her

honest, pleasant eyes, brimful of tears, to her husband's face.

'But you might be willing, but not able; and then you might *rue*\* taking on um,' he said.

'Anyhow, John, let me try; and when I'se tired we can put um out to nurse,' replied Martha, resolutely.

Now John was apt in the end to find that Martha got her own way, and he saw plainly she would in this case also.

'But if folks hears o' this, why maybe we'se be having babies left constant at the door,' said John, a quiet smile breaking out in spite of his perplexity.

'We can wait until some more comes, anyhow; 'and who's to know how these here came if we keep our mouths shut? Sure t' lad ut brought um wouldn't know what was in t' hamper, and t' poor mother won't tell. All we've got to say, if folks asks questions, is as 'ow we're taking care on um for t' parents, who has been obligated for to go away for awhile. In course folks 'll think they're some relations' childer,' replied Martha.

'Aye, as my old mother used to say, "A close mouth

\* Regret.

shows a wise head." For sure you and I can hold our tongues,' said John.

' Betty mun know, but she'll not talk; and happen you might speak to t' parson about um,' replied Martha; 'but not nothing more mun be telled to nobody,' she added.

' And you're right sure you'd like to keep um, Martha ?'

' Certain sure, John. And now we mun make um more comfortabler for night than in this hamper. Bring t' large clothes-basket, John, and I'll make um a bed in that.'

John obediently went to the scullery and fetched the basket, and soon, with a pillow, a soft bed was made. They turned out the hamper to see what clothes the children had, but found the shabby, dirty night-gowns they had on, a few old rags to cover them, and a woman's well-worn flannel petticoat, were all.

Now Martha was not like a great many servants of the present day — one who dressed herself to look fine *outside*, but whose under-clothing is so disgraceful that it will not bear inspection. She was always neat, though very plain, but she had as good under-clothes as

many ladies ; and in a couple of her warm flannel petticoats she wrapped the little babies, so that they might be comfortable for the night.

Various other preparations had to be made before they could retire to rest. Nearly all pussy's milk was used, and something else had to be made ready, lest the babies should be hungry in the night. At length all was prepared, and John followed Martha, carrying the basket, with its precious contents, upstairs, carefully placing it on Martha's side the bed.

### CHAPTER III.

' I love to hear the story  
Which angel voices tell,  
How once the King of glory  
Came down on earth to dwell.  
I am both weak and sinful,  
But this I surely know,  
The Lord came down to save me  
Because He loved me so.'

*Christian Friend.*

THE twins slept well during the night. The warm food and comfortable wrappings they had were partly the cause, added to the remaining effects of the sleeping draught given by their mother. But John and his wife never closed their eyes. John lay quiet, thinking much, and greatly perplexed to know whether he was acting rightly by allowing Martha to have her own way, and having any concealment from their master. But John knew where to take his troubles. He believed in his

heart that what the Lord Jesus said was true. He remembered the promise, ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.’ (Matt. xxi. 22.) And John *did* believe. He knew prayer, *true prayer*, is never unheard by God, though sometimes the answer does not come all at once, or in the way we expect or desire it. During the hours he laid awake, he asked God to direct him and Martha to act in the matter rightly as regarded keeping the children. Martha, as well as her husband, was a good Christian, but, like her namesake in the Bible, she was apt to be ‘careful and troubled about many things ;’ and she often forgot to bring her cares and perplexities to Him who has promised to take His people’s troubles on Himself. She certainly prayed like John to be guided aright, but mingled with her prayers were confused thoughts about the coming morrow ; and she was sadly afraid she should not be able to get many things she required as the shops would be closed. And she wondered much how many clothes she could get made for the babies next day, besides various other matters, which kept her restless and sleepless. Almost every five minutes she bent over the basket to listen to the children’s breathing, and see that they were all right.

As early morning dawned the singers came, and Martha heard the words distinctly,—

‘ Glory to God and peace to men,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.’

She rose, too much excited to remain in bed any longer, and after dressing herself went down to light the kitchen fire. When the babies woke, her hands were very full, for both wanted feeding at once, and screamed loudly. John held the wee boy, trying to soothe him, but he never remembered having had so small a specimen of humanity before in his arms, and he was sadly puzzled how to manage. By-and-by, when the little girl was fed, Martha relieved John of his charge; and while the stillness of feeding went on, John and Martha commenced talking about the names they should give to the children. Martha had, as she thought, found two grand ones, and real Christian ones too, for they were mentioned in the Bible. ‘ Tryphena’ and ‘ Tryphosa.’ These names are to be found in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, xvi. 12, where the Apostle says, ‘ Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord.’ This is all we know of these good people. Martha’s ears had, however, been caught

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'By all means. Charity is love to God and man, as I know, and we will try to have that true love in our hearts, Martha.'

'I like this right well, John, and am glad you thought on it, and we will pray God night and day they may never disgrace their names.'

Martha kissed the little soft faces of the twins as she spoke.

'We must not be long afore we take t' little uns to be baptized. Mayhap we may have um ready by the first Sunday after New Year's Day,' said John.

'I mun be quick, and make um some new clothes; then, John, it'll be a nice beginning o' the New Year.' By this time the baby boy being fed, and both asleep again, Martha placed them in the basket, and set them near the kitchen fire. 'It be almost like a finding of Moses in the bulrushes,' she said, laughing, as she tucked the warm clothes about the infants. John now went off to fetch Betty the charwoman, who was fortunately at home, and who listened with breathless interest to John's hurried story, and hastened to follow him to the house.

Martha hailed the assistance with delight. Both babies were crying, breakfast not ready, and eager

Christmas singers were clamouring for halfpence at the door.

Things soon settled down, and when the church bells began to ring John found there was no reason why he should not go to service. He longed for the quiet of God's house, and to hear the joyful tidings of a Saviour's birth.

Strange to him was the thought that that dear Saviour's infant head was laid on straw, even as the heads of the two poor little children's had been the evening before. As he entered the church his eye caught the words in large letters over the communion-table, 'Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.' And John bent his head, and prayed that that Child might dwell in his heart by faith, and also for the little twins, that from their early days they might be His children.

Then followed the burst of joyful song from the white-robed choir :—

'Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King,  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God to sinners reconciled.'

Perhaps John had never been more thankful that he was a member of the Church of England, or for her glorious form of prayer. He felt indeed the words of holy supplication and praise, with a full heart. Fervently his voice joined in the responses, especially in the prayers for 'All young children,' 'For all who are desolate and oppressed,' thinking the while of the poor babies' mother, sad and sorrowing after her children, yet remaining firm to her marriage vow. Mr. Bosworth's sermon, too, brought comfort to John's soul; it seemed like an answer to his prayers. The pastor's text was from the shepherds' words, when the angels who announced the Saviour's birth had returned to heaven: 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.' The preacher spoke of people coming at all times to the Saviour, as the shepherds did, that they might taste and see His goodness for themselves, and of the rich blessing they would gain for their souls by so doing. He reminded them there were no cares or troubles too small for Jesus to notice, and that in forgetting this how much peace and comfort many people lose. John felt much encouraged by the minister's words, and after

the sermon was over he prayed so long that by the time he raised his head he found nearly all the congregation had departed, and the verger was shutting one of the doors.

He met the clergyman, Mr. Bosworth, in the church-yard, and after receiving from him his hearty good wishes for ‘a happy Christmas,’ John ventured to tell him of their strange Christmas hamper, and asked Mr. Bosworth to give him advice on the subject. The clergyman quite approved of their keeping the children for the present, believing in his mind that, however the good couple might wish it, they would find the charge too much for them. If, he said, after a short trial they still wished to retain the infants in their master’s house, Mr. Ramsden ought certainly to be told. To this John was perfectly agreeable.

Mr. Bosworth expressed his readiness to baptize the children the first Sunday in the new year, in the middle of the afternoon service, and John went home much relieved in his mind. All looked bright and cheery in the kitchen when he returned. Betty was laying the cloth for dinner; Martha was sitting with a baby in each arm, rocking backwards and forwards, and in her some-

what cracked voice, singing a hymn she remembered learning in childhood, beginning—

‘I think when I read that sweet story of old,  
When Jesus was here among men,  
How He took little children like lambs to His fold,  
How I wish I had been with Him then.’

‘Dear little lambs they be, may the good Shepherd keep them!’ said John, looking at the peaceful little faces lying on his wife’s kind motherly bosom.

## CHAPTER IV.

' Blest eyes that see the smiling gleam  
Upon the slumbering features glow,  
When the life-giving stream  
Touches the tender brow.

Or when the Holy Cross is signed,  
And the young soldier duly sworn,  
With true and fearless mind,  
To serve the Virgin-born.

But happiest ye, who seal'd and blest  
Back to your arms your treasure take,  
With Jesus' mark impress'd,  
To nurse for Jesus' sake.'

*Christian Year.*

It was fortunate for Martha that Mr. Ramsden remained away a whole week, for by the end of it she was almost worn out. The babies, though generally good, were wont to be fretful at times, and often just when most inconvenient. As they had no clothes fit to wear, an entire

outfit was required ; and though John and Martha bought many things for them, there were several articles of clothing Martha would not have allowed any one to make but herself. By the end of a week, however, things seemed likely to settle into order, and John and his wife had become accustomed to see a wickerwork cradle on either side the fire ; and Pussy appeared quite at ease, seated between the two, heedless of her rivals, who were for the future to have all the petting.

All had been arranged very quietly about the curiosity of the tradespeople who came to the house. When any questions were asked, John and Martha simply replied that the parents of the children were away, and that they had left them in their charge until they could return, and, of course, no one supposed *then* but that the children were some relations of Mr. and Mrs. Benson. They had always been so quiet, and, as the saying was, ‘ kept themselves to themselves,’ that few people thought of interfering about their affairs. Some few there were who wondered they liked being troubled with the wee things ; but they knew not the work and labour of love that it was, and how these good people were willing to do it for Christ’s sake. It seemed to John and Martha that

God had said to them, as Pharaoh's daughter said to Moses' mother, 'Take these children, and nurse them for me, and I will give thee thy wages.' Truly they were more than rewarded when they felt the inward conviction that they were caring for these little ones, of whom Christ said, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven,' and for whom He died.

At first John was a clumsy nurse, and Martha laughed heartily when she saw how nervous and trembly he was when he had one of the tiny ones in his arms, hardly daring to move, fearing their necks would be broken, or a limb fall off; but he soon found out his mistake, and laughed at his own awkwardness; and when he was accustomed to the work, who so fond as he of having both babies in his arms at once?

The twins soon showed their appreciation of their warm clothing, food, and good nursing; even in a week they had become plumper, and had lost their starved look, and evidently now they were likely to thrive and do well. How charmed John and Martha were in an evening when Martha undressed them for the night, to see them spread out their little bare 'pettitoes' (as Martha called them) to the warm fire, and if by any chance they

stretched their limbs and yawned, they were considered to have performed a marvel of strength.

When the important Sunday arrived for the christening, the babies were neatly dressed in clean white long gowns, with cloaks made out of some coburg given by Mr. Ramsden to Martha for a dress. They had little braided white cashmere hoods too, which gave them quite the appearance of 'gentry's childer,' Martha said. John and Martha had, after much consideration, asked Mr. Ramsden's overlooker to stand as the other godfather to the children—he, Martha, and Betty being also sponsors. Mr. Wilson (the overlooker), a quiet grave man, much attached to his Church, willingly consented, knowing John and Martha well, and that they would be sure to see that the children were brought up in the fear of God. I wonder if my young readers ever remember the vows *their* godfathers and godmothers made for them in their baptism. Do they consider that they are soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, bound by their baptismal promise to fight for Christ, not with guns and swords, but the battle against the devil's temptations, and their own wicked hearts and desires? This is a far harder battle to fight than any other, and none can conquer unless they resolve to

fight under the Captain of the Lord's host, even Jesus Christ our Lord. He only can help you, and make you more than conquerors, and give you that crown of righteousness which shall never fade away. I trust you will have the firm resolve to be what the little hymn says,—

'I am a little soldier,  
Though only five years old;  
I mean to fight for Jesus,  
And wear a crown of gold.  
I know He makes me happy,  
And loves me all the day;  
I'll be His little soldier—  
The Bible says I may.'

*Children's Friend.*

I cannot tell you how serious John and Martha felt, when, after the second lesson in church, they gathered round the font, Martha holding the twin-boy and Betty the girl. They neither of them remembered having seen any children baptized before, and they were both much affected by the beautiful service. Often Martha's handkerchief was raised to wipe her tears away, more especially when the clergyman prayed that 'they may so pass through the waves of this troublesome world that finally they may come to the land of everlasting

life, there to reign with Thee, world without end, through Jesus Christ our Lord ;' and again, when the well-known words were read, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, &c.'

The godparents reverently answered for the babies, but when Martha advanced to place the child in the minister's arms, and he asked the question, 'Name this child,' her voice quite failed her, so John stepped forward and said distinctly 'Hope,' after which he named the little girl 'Faith.' The cross was marked on the brow of each little one, and henceforth they bore the Christian name, and were outward members of the Church.

The solemn service over, Betty and Martha took the babies home, while John and his friend, Mr. Wilson, remained for the rest of the service, after which John had the children registered by the name of Benson. Mr. Bosworth spoke most kindly to him, and repeated his good wishes that the infants might grow up to be a comfort to him and his wife, and reward them for all their kindness.

## CHAPTER V.

' Only beginning the journey,  
Many a mile to go;  
Little feet how they patter  
Wandering to and fro,  
Trying again so bravely,  
Laughing in baby glee,  
Hiding the face on mother's lap,  
Proud as a baby can be.'

*Children's Friend.*

THE first train on Monday morning brought Mr. Ramsden back to his business, little knowing of the addition that had been made to his household during his absence. But there was no fear of his being disturbed by it, for he never was known to set his foot in the kitchen; while the thickness of the green baize door, and his own deafness, quite prevented any sounds being heard. Most honestly did his faithful servants carry out all their re-

solutions respecting spending only their own money on the little ones. And not only that, but they were careful that none of their work was neglected either. If possible, the furniture was brighter, the fire-irons were better polished, and the carpets swept cleaner; and every comfort their master had been accustomed to was as well attended to as ever. John's plate had always done him credit, but somehow it seemed to have gained additional lustre since the twins came to the house. Now and then, in his own untaught way, he might even be heard singing some cradle hymn while he was rubbing it. The little babies seemed to bring new life and happiness to the good people who had adopted them. John and Martha never grudged the additional labour they caused, though often they were very tired when night came; and were obliged more frequently to have help than before in the kitchen. There was a poor girl whose arm had been taken off by the mill machinery, and to whom Mr. Ramsden made a weekly allowance—she came regularly for a few hours each day to nurse the twins; and always, when the weather was fine, took them out for an airing. When they grew strong enough to sit up, John had a sort of wooden carriage made for them (it was before the days of perambulators),

and in this the babies took their daily exercise in the open air.

The twins soon grew strong and healthy, and could be put down on some old carpet to roll about on the hearth, John supplying them with plenty of playthings. Very soon the grave and dignified Pussy began to feel the little clinging fingers trying to grasp her soft fur and stroke it (of course the wrong way); but even Pussy grew used to this insult, and submitted wonderfully calmly to the little pets' rough handling.

No news meanwhile came from the poor mother; and weeks and months wore on, and John and his wife ceased to expect any letters; and, except that they felt pity for her hard fate, they did not mind—for no greater trouble could have happened to them than having to give up their little treasures.

There was much difference in the twins. At an early age Hope was larger, stronger, and braver than Faith. She had a pale, pretty, little face, and was less forward in almost everything, though not less intelligent. Hope would fly into a passion, if his bread and milk was not ready just when he wanted it. Faith would sit quiet, only looking wistfully at her basin, rarely fretting. At a year

old, Hope had managed, by biting hard at his bricks and a piece of india rubber to force a dozen teeth through ; his sister, on the contrary, had only half as many.

Hope soon crawled about the floor in all directions, pulled himself up by the chairs and tables, and soon taught himself to walk ; while Faith only tried to use her feet when held securely in John or Martha's arms ; then she would cautiously put first one foot, and then the other, on the ground. And so her brother could toddle about long before his sister. She could speak rather more plainly than Hope ; this seemed the only point in which she excelled him ; and it was a great event when Faith first said distinctly 'Dadda and Mudder.' John tried to make her say 'Father,' but the letter *f* was hard for the little lips just at first. John and Martha were old-fashioned people, and did not approve of the words 'Mamma and Papa,' which we hear the little children, even in the streets, taught to say nowadays ; and I am sure they were right—such names are not half so beautiful as those dear words, 'Father and Mother,' the latter especially ; there is something beautiful and holy in it, something that makes one think of a great deal of love and tenderness :—

'Of all the names to memory dear,  
One name to me alone is dearest;  
Though many to my heart be near,  
Yet this shall ever be the nearest:  
For on my heart's most sacred place  
'Tis deeper graved than any other;  
For naught from thence shall ere erase  
The loved, the honoured name of *Mother*.'

In course of time Hope grew so strong, and in Martha's language 'so rampageous and mischievous,' that he was found one day, by the assistance of sundry table-legs, and by pushing a chair before him, to have got out into the passage, and narrowly escaped tumbling down the stone steps which led into the back yard.

This frightened John and Martha so much, that they had a small wooden gate fixed to the back door, through the bars of which Hope (and by-and-by, Faith too,) used to look, like little prisoners, watching the sparrows hopping about eating the crumbs Martha threw them, or listening to the dog Nero barking; and how they would clap their hands with delight, as he tried to break his chain with rage when the butcher's boy came into the yard.

Sometimes (not often) Mr. Ramsden was away on business in the afternoon, and then John and Martha

would make haste and finish their work, dress themselves in their best, and take the children to the public park, some two or three miles from the smoky town, where the children could breathe the fresh air from the hills, and toddle about and gather daisies on the nice green grass, or watch the swans sailing about on the artificial lakes.

Once they were there on a fête-day, and the children's delight when they heard the band play was pleasant to see. Hope clapped his hands, and shouted with joy. Faith paused in her play, and listened with distended blue eyes and breathless attention; her little hands clasped tightly together in deep delight. But it was not often the children saw green fields, trees and flowers, or heard much music, except now and then when an old man came with a French piano into the back yard. But they were well off compared with many poor, wretched little children in Harden, who were left to bring themselves up in—I might almost say the gutters, among those filthy back streets and courts, where the pure light of heaven entered but little, where clothing and good food were luxuries unknown. Indeed there are hundreds of such little ones whose cries go up to God in heaven.

Children, whose mothers desert them to work in the mills sometimes to keep themselves from starving ; but oftener I fear that they may have money to spend on dress and drink, and who care not what becomes meanwhile of their infants during the day time. So the children tumble up anyhow ; not a few die after a brief struggle for life, and for such I doubt not it is far better than a life of sin spent in the world. Many children there are in such places as Harden who learn to speak from hearing men swearing, drunkards singing, and women quarrelling. They live on from day to day and from year to year, and they never hear of Christ, of heaven, or hell. They do not know that it is wrong to steal, and lie, and fight. Often their food is little more than dirty cabbage-leaves, orange-peel, or potato-parings, which they pick up in the street ; and their only way of spending time is in making dirt-pies, or playing with old shoes, hats, or bones, or even an old dirty rabbit-skin stolen from some collector of such things. It makes one's heart sick to see and hear of these sad scenes, especially when we know of so many men who are making princely fortunes every year, it may be out of the labour of the parents of these miserable little wretches, and who frequently refuse out

of their abundance to raise these poor creatures by means of Ragged and Industrial Schools out of their lost and ruined state, and help them on their way to heaven. But so it is, and we can only hope and pray that a change will come, and that these lost ones will be brought home at last to the fold of the Good Shepherd. For little Hope and Faith the lines had fallen to them in pleasant places, and though they were brought up under one of the great mill chimneys, and the air was often dark and heavy, yet the kind care bestowed upon them kept them amongst it all both strong and healthy.

## CHAPTER VI.

' Wheresoe'er a foot hath gone,  
Wheresoe'er the sun hath shone,  
On a league of peopled ground,  
Little children may be found !  
Blessings on them ! they in me  
Wake a loving sympathy,  
With their wishes, hopes, and fears ;  
With their laughter and their tears ;  
With their wonder so intense ;  
With their small experience ;  
Little children not alone  
On the wide world are ye known.

Where no sinful thing hath trod  
In the presence of your God,  
Spotless, blameless, glorified,  
Little children, ye abide.'

*Christian Verses for Children.*

THUS four long years came and went ; and you will hardly believe it when I tell you, that during all this time the

twins had lived in Mr. Ramsden's house and he had never known of their existence. John and Martha were always wishing and intending to tell him, but the time for revealing their grand secret had never yet come. Mr. Ramsden appeared to grow more fixed in his old habits, and to cease caring for even the few things that once gave him pleasure. Often, too, he was unwell, and sometimes he seemed so weary, John hardly liked to speak to him at all. I do not think John and Martha were at all right, for though continuing to be most careful only to provide for Hope and Faith with their own money, yet, as the children were still finding shelter in their master's house, they ought to have *made* an opportunity for telling him about it. True, some time before, when Mr. Ramsden had offered to raise their wages, they nobly declined to receive anything more; yet the children should not have remained in the house without Mr. Ramsden's knowledge. Of one thing, however, I am sure, if John and Martha had been fully persuaded in their own minds that they were *wrong* they would at all hazards have named their secret to the old gentleman.

The twins were much altered since they first arrived as helpless babies in the hamper, and they were the pride

and delights of their adopted parents. Hope was full of fun and mischief. Indeed Martha often said he took a deal more looking after than when a baby. Instead of being contented with stroking Pussy's hair the wrong way, Hope liked pulling her tail now, and often was rewarded by a sharp scratch. I cannot tell you of half Hope's tricks and mischiefs. His hiding John's spectacles, setting the water-tap running, thrusting his little red arms up to the shoulders into the baking pan of flour ready for making bread, were nothing to some of his other pranks. Once, in his anxiety to know what was in a large tub in the yard, he dragged a chair out and leaning over too far fell head over heels into the pig's wash, out of which he was taken struggling and screaming with fright. He had a famous ducking too in the peggy-tub\* another time in consequence of his curiosity. But his most audacious adventure hitherto had been in the chimney-sweeping line.

The sweeps having been seen by Hope one day sweeping the kitchen chimney, and being desirous of imitating the poor little boy who went up with his brush, he took the opportunity of trying his abilities when up-stairs in

\* A round washing-tub.

the room where they slept. Having secured a hair-brush, he with unusual caution contrived to get into the fireplace, and by a struggle raised himself from the bars into the chimney, his little fat legs only remaining visible to tell the story of his whereabouts. Finding all dark, and the falling soot blinding his eyes, and getting into his mouth, he tried to scream, and was nearly choked by the effort. Martha fortunately returned to the room in time to pull her boy down, black as the sweep's boy, and lament over his mischievousness in loud terms. However, it served as a lesson to Hope as regards his aspirations after chimney-sweeping. The boy was a sore perplexity to John and Martha, from his love of fun, and he was so good-tempered and full of brightness, that it was very hard to punish him. No child could have been more sorry than Hope, when he saw he had really grieved his father and mother, and he was ever ready with tears to promise amendment, which promises he unfortunately speedily forgot. He was not really naughty, only thoughtless and forgetful. The little joys and pleasures of life, even if mischievous, were too tempting for Hope to resist, and he went in for everything he thought he should like in the most rash manner.

‘We can’t put old heads on young shoulders ; t’lad will learn wisdom by-and-by,’ Martha would say when John shook his head over some of Hope’s tricks.

‘But I fear me he’ll bring hisself to grief some day ; I’d as lief he were liker Faith,’ John would answer.

There was very little that was naughty in bonny wee Faith, with her pretty curling golden hair, which looked as if the sun had left a kiss upon it, and her sweet blue eyes, tinted with the colour of heaven’s own sky. She was always clinging and affectionate, rarely disobedient. A picture-book was to her a mine of wealth. Hour after hour she would sit on a little stool in the chimney-corner, trying to learn her letters and spell out the words in her book. Her greatest delight was, when John’s work was done, to climb on his knee and listen while he told stories from the Holy Bible. Hope’s favourites were David and Goliath, and Daniel in the den of lions. Faith’s were of Noah, Joseph, and, above all, of Samuel, the child called of God. And often, when Faith laid awake in her bed at night, she would long and wish that God would call *her* too ; and she was ready to say, ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth ;’ and how glad she would be to do all He told her. Her little heart would throb, and her eyes fill

with tears, when she thought of Jesus having nowhere to lay His head, and dying on the cross to save sinners ; and she wished she had been a child when He was on earth, that ‘mudder’ might have taken her to Him : and she would have told Him He should have her nice warm bed and bread and milk. She had a rare talent, for so young a child, for music. At three years old even she could, in her baby way, hum a little air ; and this taste increased, until at four years old she could sing little hymns, though it was few tunes she heard except at church.

John did all the teaching for the twins. He was what Martha called a ‘good scollard,’ which meant that he could read and write well, and also, when occasion required, add up an addition sum. He had read and re-read his Bible, and few men knew it better and loved it more.

As early as the children could be taught, even before they could speak, John used to fold their little hands together morning and evening, and say a few words of prayer for them ; and when they could talk he taught them these simple words : ‘Pray God bless Hope and Faith ; make us good children ; forgive and take away

our naughty tempers ; take care of us by night and by day. Bless dear father and mother, and all who love us, for Jesus' sake.' John put in the last words to include their poor parents, if still alive. Then Faith said the little verses at night :—

'Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,  
    Bless Thy little lamb to-night;  
Through the darkness be Thou near me,  
    Keep me safe till morning light.  
Through this day Thy hand has led me,  
    And I thank Thee for Thy care;  
Thou hast warmed me—clothed and fed me,  
    Listen to my evening prayer.  
Let my sins be all forgiven,  
    Bless the friends I love so well;  
Take me when I die to heaven,  
    Happy there with Thee to dwell.'

Hope's verses were chosen with reference to his frequent temptations to do wrong :—

'Lord, look upon a little child,  
    By nature sinful, rude, and wild;  
Oh ! put Thy gracious hands on me,  
    And make me all I ought to be.  
Make me a child, a child of God,  
    Washed in my Saviour's precious blood,  
And my whole heart from sin set free,  
    A little vessel full of Thee.'

Dear Jesus, take me to Thy breast,  
And bless me, that I may be blest:  
Both when I wake and when I sleep,  
Thy little lamb in safety keep.'

Whatever indulgence Hope was allowed at other times, he was never permitted to gabble through his prayers or look about him without being corrected; though, years afterwards, when Hope was grown up, he used to say how he had often repeated his prayers like a parrot, without thought; and that the words in his hymn, 'A little vessel full of Thee,' conveyed no other meaning than 'A little vessel full of tea;' and as the tea-things were generally on the table at the time, he fancied it had something to do with them.\*

On Sundays (after the children were three years old) they always went once a-day to church, and when there, while Hope would stand up on the seat, listening with glowing cheeks to the music, Faith preferred standing below on a stool, her little heart filled with solemn thoughts at the tones of the fine organ, and wondering whether God had an organ in heaven, and if it was grander and larger than the one in the church. Then she would

\* A fact.

wonder whether the white robes of the elders in heaven, of whom her father had told her, that they rest not day nor night praising and blessing God, would be like the surplices of the choristers, and if they could sing louder and better. Would God, thought little Faith, let her soon join the choir in heaven? How old must she be before she would be fit to wear a white robe, and have a harp and golden crown? Hope's ambition was by no means to join God's choir *above*, but on earth, and he was fired with ambition that he might quickly grow up, and oh! how he would like to sing loud and long like the head choir boy in the solos. Then Hope had a longing to be a clergyman, only he had a fear that he would have to learn a great many lessons before he could preach, and Hope hated lessons with all his heart. Not unfrequently Martha found him on week-days with a table-cloth wrapped round him, standing on the kitchen-dresser, trying to preach like Mr. Bosworth, little Faith looking on with amazement at her brother's eloquence. Sunday was made a happy day for the children; for, after service, John read to them, or told them stories, and taught them pretty hymns, while Martha sat in her rocking-chair, listening too, and being taught even with the little children.

## CHAPTER VII.

'Together we children assemble in school,  
And should be attentive to order and rule;  
We sing or we read as our teacher commands,  
And keep time so nicely by clapping our hands.'

*Infant School Magazine.*

WHEN Mr. Bosworth had time, he now and then looked in to see Mr. and Mrs. Benson, and on such occasions, when his visits were to them, and not to their master, he generally came in by the back way. He always took great notice of the twins, and was pleased to see how well they grew, and got on, and how fond they were of their kind foster-parents. One day he arrived at an unhappy moment, for Master Hope had, in thoughtless ignorance, been doing something that was very cruel, and his own tears, and those of his sister and Martha, were flowing freely. One of Pussy's kittens, a little black one, had

been kept for Hope and Faith's especial pleasure, and though it had rather a hard time of it with Hope, yet both the children dearly loved it. Now Hope had a private idea that the kitten would be very much prettier if its colour was brighter, and he fancied he had found a plan to effect this, and only waited a convenient time for putting this plan into operation. One morning John had gone out to post a letter, and Martha had to finish dusting the drawing-room, so she gave each of the children a piece of dough from her large bread pot, and told them she should be back presently, and they were to be quite quiet until her return. Faith instantly set to work to mould the paste into the form of little babies, a favourite employment, and these baby cakes were duly baked by Martha and eaten by the little cannibals afterwards. She was so busy, she did not observe that Hope had left his dough at first untouched, and was elsewhere. Hope had seen an opportunity of changing the kitten's colour. He had often watched Martha put lobsters into boiling water —black, and shortly afterwards they were taken out scarlet, and this was Hope's idea of changing his little favourite's colour. Martha had left a pan of water by the edge of the fire, and instantly Hope seized the unfor-

tunate kitten and popped it into the boiling water. There was hardly a second for one piteous ‘mew,’ and all was over, though Hope knew it not, and calmly returned to make little marbles of the paste. By-and-by Martha came back, and Hope innocently asked her to take Pussy out of the pan, as he thought she would be ‘red by this time.’ Martha gave a horrified scream, and fished out the poor dead pet, showing Hope his handiwork. Whereupon, Hope, who had powerful lungs, roared with all his might, but it was pitiful to see Faith’s agony. She took the little dripping, dead kitten on her knee, still streaming with the hot water, and rained a perfect flood of tears over it. Amid Hope’s noise and Martha’s loud talking, Mr. Bosworth knocked at the door, and, despairing of being heard, he entered.

‘Anything the matter, Mrs. Benson? Nothing very bad, I hope,’ he said, seeing the grief of the three.

‘One o’ Hope’s mischievous tricks, sir. But he’s as sorry hisself as I am now. I often tell him, sir, that “Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do,”’ replied Martha, and Hope howled louder than ever, as she told the sad story.

‘Don’t you think it would be a good thing for the

children to go to the Infants' School, Mrs. Benson ; they are quite old enough now, and you would find it a great relief having them away for a few hours every day ?' said Mr. Bosworth.

' I sure, sir, I don't know. John and me is afraid o' their learning bad manners,' replied Martha, doubtfully.

' I oun't go to kool. Hatan not make me mischief no more, never. Go away, ou bad man,' exclaimed Hope, who had a perfect terror of school. His ideas were much confused as to school life, believing one of the principal parts consisted in liberal administrations of whipping, if impossible lessons were not learnt.

' Ah ! ah ! youngster, you've some of the old Adam in you, I perceive,' Mr. Bosworth said, smiling at Hope's words and tiny clenched fists.

' I are not old Adam,' shouted Hope. But little Faith, still holding her dead pet in her pinafore, said, ' I should like to go to kool. I learn to read.'

On hearing this, Hope brightened a little.

' Quite right, little Faith, and you would like to march and clap too ; would you not ?'

' Ess, I should,' was Faith's reply.

'I must ask John, sir, afore I decide,' said Martha, who was not at all reconciled to the idea.

'I don't think you need fear the children learning anything wrong at the school, and they need not stay to play with the others after school is over. Meanwhile just let me take them and show them the infant-school,' said Mr. Bosworth.

'Thank you kindly, sir; I'll soon have um ready,' replied Martha, proud to think of her treasures being taken out by the parson.

The tears were soon dried from their little eyes, and the kitten for the time forgotten—for children's troubles are like April showers, heavy for a few moments, but soon over. Mr. Bosworth took hold of the children by the hand, and walked with them to the school, which was about a quarter of a mile's distance from Ramsden House. When they reached the door, they heard a hum of little voices; and when the door was opened, they saw about one hundred little children seated on raised seats, one above another, with a pleasant-looking teacher below, teaching them words from a black board, on which they were written with chalk. All rose when the clergyman entered.

'Good morning, Miss Tanner. I hope you have only good children here this morning. I have brought two little friends of mine to hear some singing,' he said pleasantly.

'I think all are pretty good, sir. What shall they sing?'

'Oh, that nice little hymn beginning, 'God is in heaven.'

'Stand!' said Miss Tanner, and all obeyed. 'Attention! Now, hands behind, 1, 2, 3,' said Miss Tanner, with the air of a drill-sergeant. She then commenced the tune, and a chorus of baby voices took up the words,—

'God is in heaven. Can He hear  
A little prayer like mine?  
Yes, thoughtful child, thou need'st not fear,  
He listens unto thine.

God is in heaven. Can He see  
When I am doing wrong?  
Yes, that He can, He looks at thee  
All day, and all night long.

God is in heaven. Would He know  
If I should tell a lie?  
Yes, though thou saidst it very low,  
He'd hear it in the sky.

God is in heaven. Does He care,  
Or is He good to me?  
Yes, all thou hast to eat or wear,  
'Tis God that giveth thee.

God is in heaven. May I pray  
To go there when I die?  
Yes, love, be good, and then one day  
He'll call thee to the sky.'

'Very good. Now I want my little friends to see you march. Hope, do you like that?' asked Mr. Bosworth.

'Ess, ebber so much. Fafe, don't ou?'

'Ess, 'deed I do,' replied Faith.

Down came the infants from their seats with a great clattering of little clogs, and formed themselves into a line.

'Left foot first,' said Miss Tanner. 'Now!' Then began the marching song,—

'We'll all march to our places,  
With quick, but steady paces,  
And sit with smiling faces,  
To have a little rest.  
We'll all march round in order,  
We'll all keep off the border,  
We'll all throw back our shoulders,  
And hold our heads erect.'

'Capital!' said Mr. Bosworth cheerily. 'Now just the clapping song, and then it will be twelve o'clock.'

Clapping seemed in great favour with the infants, for they made a great noise with their tongues and hands while they sung—

'Clap, clap all together,  
Clap, clap away;  
This is the way to exercise,  
And have a little play.  
Twist, twist altogether,  
Twist, twist away,  
This is the way we exercise,  
And have a little play.'

'Oh, it are so nice!' said Hope, breathing freely, now that he was satisfied Miss Tanner did not always keep a rod in her hand. 'Fafe and me would like to cap.' Hope was quite assured of his sister, if *he* was willing to go to school.

'Very well. We must see what father and mother say. Now see how quietly the children will go out.'

And Hope and Faith watched the orderly marching up to the hats and bonnets hung near the door; and no noise was made until outside in the play-ground.

After this Mr. Bosworth took the children round the room, and showed them the pictures on the walls.

'Oh, de Good Sepherd! I say 'bout Him in my payers,' said Faith, with delighted eyes looking at a picture of Jesus and His lambs.

'Yes, my little girl, and I hope you and Hope are some of the lambs of His flock, and like His green pastures.'

'Ess, I does, and I 'ont to go and live wif Him, and be an anzel.'

'No, Fafe, ou don't. Ou can be a Desus' lamb wifout going away. Ou 'tay and live wif farder and mudder and me. Not an anzel,' said Hope impetuously.

Mr. Bosworth presently said it was time to go home, and he therefore took them back, eager to tell all they had seen and heard, and to beg that they might go to the Infants' School.

## CHAPTER VIII.

'Have courage to do right;  
Have courage to do right,  
The world may sneer,  
But never fear. Have courage to do right.'

THE children obtained their desire, and went to school, and much they learnt to like their lessons. Even lazy little Hope was as anxious to get on as persevering Faith, for in his little heart there swelled an ambition which would never allow him to permit others to excel him. And John and Martha found it much better for them to have the children away some hours during the day, as they could get on so much better with their work.

This happened soon after Christmas, when the children were four years old. All went on well for a few weeks, when John, who never considered anything too good for the little ones, was tempted one day to buy a little warm

red cloak for Faith, which he had seen in one of the shop-windows. Martha thought it sadly too smart, but the child looked so bonny when it was put on, that Martha could only yield consent, kiss her, and say she looked like 'Red Riding Hood.' Now I have before told you that Mr. Ramsden was both bad-sighted and deaf, but he could see bright large objects with tolerable distinctness; and it happened one morning that as he was passing through his mill he chanced to look out of one of the windows which overlookod his own back-yard, and he saw, or fancied he saw, something very bright moving about in it. This was Faith, who had just returned from school, and was playing with Hope at making what she called a 'baby house' on the flags. Mr. Ramsden called his clerk's attention to it, and inquired what 'that red thing was.' The clerk, never for a moment supposing his master was unaware of the children's existence, replied, it was only Mr. and Mrs. Benson's little girl in a red cloak. If he had thought it needful to observe, he would have seen the look of utter bewilderment Mr. Ramsden gave him. The old gentleman, however, was not given to asking many questions, and he said nothing. Shortly afterwards he left the mill, and did what he had

not done for years, manely, entered his own back-yard. Hope was running after Faith to catch her, and in her anxiety to escape she did not see Mr. Ramsden, and run quite up against his legs. She stopped suddenly, and looked up frightened at the little old gentleman with spectacles and white hair, who looked at her intently.

‘Little lassie, who are *you*?’ he said, not unkindly.

But Faith’s tongue seemed tied.

‘She are Fafe—I are Hope,’ said a small boy in a cloth tunic, presenting himself to the old man’s notice.

‘My boy, speak louder—I am deaf. Where do you live?’

Hope placed his rosy lips close to Mr. Ramsden, and shouted,—

‘We live here wif farder and mudder, in dis bery house.’

And Hope pointed to the kitchen-door.

‘Eh! eh! What? what?’ said the old gentleman excitedly.

‘Ess, me do, I say,’ shouted Hope, indignantly.

‘I must call John. I don’t understand. Come in with me.’

And, taking Faith by the hand, followed by Hope, he entered the kitchen.

No one was there. Martha was putting Mr. Ramsden's bedroom in order, and John was out on an errand. Mr. Ramsden opened the green baize door, and gently forced Faith through it.

'Don't be 'fraid, Fafe; he 'on't hurt us,' said Hope, manfully.

In all their lives those little ones had never been through that door; indeed I doubt if they knew there was any other part of the house except the back premises. When they were old enough, John had had a bolt placed on the door, to prevent their pushing it open.

Into the dining-room Mr. Ramsden led the astonished children.

'Surely,' thought Hope, 'this was the "house Beautiful" that farder read about in the "Pilgrim's Progress;"' only where could the three damsels be, Piety, Prudence, and Charity? And Mr. Ramsden did not look like the porter; and they had past no lions guarding the entrance.

Faith, on the contrary, wondered whether this was

the gate of heaven — it was so grand; only she knew that in heaven the blind eyes can see and the deaf ears can hear, and therefore Mr. Ramsden's spectacles were out of place.

Mr. Ramsden sat down in an arm-chair, and put the infants before him, and looked at them intently.

'Now tell me,' he said, 'how long have you lived here?'

'We growed here always,' replied Hope.

'Whose children are you?'

'Farder and mudder's, in course.'

Upon this, Mr. Ramsden, with an almost frightened look of bewilderment, rang the bell so violently that Martha came bustling down-stairs instantly. Her start of terror and surprise was piteous. She flung her apron right over her head, as she was wont to do when very much excited, and burst into tears.

'Oh, master, master,' she sobbed, 'forgie us — we always meant to tell ye afore, but we never like found a opportunity.'

'Bless me, what *do* you mean? I never knew you had any children, Martha! I did not think——'

The old man stopped, and looked earnestly at Martha.

'No, sir; no. They be like childer sent to us in our old age. We allus said so. Like Sarah and Abraham, sir,—you know they was very old, sir,' said Martha, making the confusion worse than ever.

'Martha,' said Mr. Ramsden, solemnly, 'I really think you don't know what you are saying. *Your* children! it's nonsense. I don't believe it. Where's John?'

Martha stepped into the passage, and called her husband loudly. Fortunately he was there to answer the summons.

'Oh, John, lad! he's found the childer! What mun we do? I am all of a tremble,' exclaimed Martha.

'We mun tell the truth, as we ought to have done long sin,' said John, entering the room.

'Master,' he said, respectfully, 'I humbly ax your pardon for Martha and me, about these here little uns; but if she may take them away now, I'll tell you all about um.'

'Very well, John. Martha does not appear even to know whose they are,' replied Mr. Ramsden.

Martha, still sobbing, led away the astonished children, who were eager to ask all sorts of questions about the grand room, and its bright chairs, carpet, and table, and

the beautiful pictures on the walls ; which, however, for the present their mother was incapable of answering.

By-and-by John came back ; and, though his face was grave, he told Martha their master had freely forgiven them, and had been much interested to hear of the twins ; that the only reproof he had given had been gently to remind John that he and Martha should have told him at once about the children ; which John knew full well, and humbly again asked pardon for not having done so. Mr. Ramsden had not only consented to the infants remaining in his house, but told John he might bring them sometimes to him in an evening when he brought in the tea-tray, as he should like to see them. This was a great deal for Mr. Ramsden to say ; and most deeply thankful to God were John and Martha that things had turned out so well ; from henceforth they felt as if a load had been removed from their minds.

A few days after, when John took in the tea-tray, he gave Faith Mr. Ramsden's slippers to carry, and Hope his snuff-box, which he had been refilling with snuff.

It was curious to watch the peculiar way in which the old man looked at little Faith, as she gently laid the slippers down at his feet. Hope, however, eager to do

*his* share of attention, darted forward, and presenting the snuff-box under Mr. Ramsden's nose, shouted,—

‘It's for ou to 'mell at.’

‘Eh, what? Well, you *are* good little ones; I'll see if I have anything for you.’

With that he fumbled in his pocket, and brought out two crown-pieces, which he had been keeping on purpose for them.

‘There! you can buy some “goodies” with these,’ he said.

‘A big siller penny—how dolly!’ shouted Hope.

‘Jolly’ was a word that in those days was only just beginning to be popular, and Hope had heard it at the Infants' School.

Faith lifted her blue eyes to the old gentleman's face and said,—

‘Tank ou ebber so much.’

‘You're welcome, little lass,’ said Mr. Ramsden—not hearing, but understanding what she meant.

‘Hope, where's your manners?’ said John.

Whereupon Hope shouted his warm thanks into Mr. Ramsden's ear. And both scampered off to show Martha their treasures. And Martha, grateful and delighted,

'felt as if,' she said, 'she had nought left to wish for now, except that the childer were growed up and doing well for theirselves, and ready for the world to come.'

Alas, poor Martha! a cloud was hanging over her head ready to burst; but she knew it not.

## CHAPTER IX.

'Oh ! for the death of those that die  
Like daylight in the west ;  
That sink in peace like the waves of eve,  
To calm untroubled rest.  
They stand before their Father's face,  
Their tears and conflicts o'er ;  
Redeemed and washed they stay at home ;  
And shall go out no more.  
Home, sweet home !  
Oh ! for that land of rest above,  
Our own eternal home !'

*Hymns for the Church on Earth.*

ABOUT a month after the discovery of the children by Mr. Ramsden (during which time it was an understood thing that Faith took Mr. Ramsden's slippers to him every evening, followed by Hope, whose curiosity was always excited to see the funny old gentleman who wore such large spectacles), John heard that there was a good deal of scarlet fever among children, and especially in their part of the town.

The parental feelings of both took alarm, and John and Martha at once removed the children from school. More than this, John wrote to his sister, who had recently become a widow, and who was living at their native village, asking her to take charge of the little ones for a time, thinking the change would do both of them good, as well as keep them out of the way of danger. The day before they were to go, however, little Faith complained of feeling sick and cold. She seemed so poorly at night that Martha put her in a warm bath by the kitchen fire.

'I say my prayers now,' said Faith, when she was ready for bed.

'Say um on my knee, honey,' replied Martha, 'as you be poorly.' But Faith would not; and slipping down on to her knees by Martha, she folded her tiny hands, and slowly repeated them. 'Hope say his too, now,' said Faith. Hope reluctantly complied, and repeated them rather carelessly, Faith meanwhile listening and correcting him when he made a mistake. Martha then carried the little girl to bed, but she noticed as she did so how flushed her face was, and her breathing slightly hurried.

'Does my lamb feel better now?' she asked, sitting down by her darling. 'My froat (throat) hurts, mudder,' she said. Martha's heart died within her; was her treasure beginning in the scarlet fever? By-and-by Faith fell into an uneasy sort of sleep, starting every now and then, and muttering incoherent words. Martha at length called for John, and both agreed it would be best at once to send for the doctor. When John brought him to the bed-side Faith was awake asking for water. She was so 'firsty,' she said, and would rather have it than the tea which Martha was anxious she should take. Mr. Lee (the doctor) was very kind, and did all he could for the child, saying he feared she might have the fever, but at present it was not a decided case; he trusted the medicine he would send would relieve her, and he would see her early in the morning again. John accompanied the doctor home, that he might lose no time in bringing the medicine for his little love; meanwhile his heart was raised in prayer that God would spare their little one, if it were His holy will. There was only one thing in which Faith was generally unmanageable, and that was in the matter of taking medicine, and not without a misgiving did Martha pour out the dose, saying, 'My lammie will take

this to make her better. Never mind if it be a bit nasty if it only makes her well.' Little Faith, with trembling fevered hand, took the glass, a sweet smile lighting on her face as she said, 'I be a 'ittle queen, mudder,' and drank it off at once.

' Dear heart, you *are* good. God grant it may make you better.'

' I ont to see Hopey now, 'fore I go to 'leep,' she said wearily. It never occurred to John or Martha to keep Hope from the room, though they were going to move his little bed into the kitchen that Faith might not be disturbed ; they were too full of trouble to think of infection, and accordingly Hope came to his little sister, who twined her arms lovingly round his neck. 'Hopey, ou does love Desus, doesn't ou ?'

' Ess, Fafe, when I are a good boy, not when I are naughty,' said Hope.

' Will ou pay ou love Him always, Hope? Dood night. I are so tired; kiss Fafe, a big kiss.'

And Hope did kiss the little hot face raised to his with a warm loving kiss. Then John took him away to put him to bed; Betty, the charwoman, had come to stay all night with Martha upstairs, and John said he

should not undress, but only lie down on the kitchen hearth-rug, and Martha must call him if anything was wanted.

As the latter part of the night came on the child's breathing became more hurried, and though her eyes seemed partly closed, her sleeping was not rest, and she tossed about uneasily, and gasped every now and then.

'Oh, John ! my heart is sore for the child. I fear me her throat is a deal worse. When she is right wake, if she seems no better, we'd better send for t' doctor again,' said Martha, about two o'clock in the morning, when John had stolen up noiselessly to see how little Faith was.

By-and-by she opened her eyes, and gasped. 'Oh ! my froat, my froat, it are so bad. I can't 'peak.' Martha called for John in haste, and he started off for the doctor at once. Tenderly Martha took the little one out of bed, and wrapt her up warmly, while she sat down by the fire with her in her arms trying to get her to swallow some toast-and-water. 'I can't, I can't,' gasped the poor little darling, after a vain effort. As the doctor came in with John, little Faith made an effort to raise her eyes to her father's face.

‘Are I berry ill?’ she asked faintly.

‘Yes, my lamb; but I am praying the Lord to make thee well,’ said John. Martha sobbed aloud. ‘Are I going to die, farder?’ Soft and low was the sweet little voice in its difficulty of speaking; but the little face looked, even in its agony, calm and peaceful.

‘Dear heart, if the good Shepherd called thee to Him wouldst thou be afraid to go?’ said poor John, with quivering lips and voice.

‘De good Sepherd. Oh! I go wif Him anywhere;’ and the little mouth even showed a sweet smile. The doctor ordered strong mustard-plasters and other remedies, and himself kindly assisted in administering them, but all in vain, and they saw plainly that Jesus was ‘calling the little child unto Him.’

‘Oh! my Faith; maybe thou art going to leave us,’ sobbed Martha, when the doctor had taken his leave, and, weak and nearly exhausted, little Faith was resting in John’s arms, Martha trembling, and kneeling beside her.

‘I are not ’fraid. I are so happy.’ The dear little voice spoke these words with a last effort, but a bright smile on the sweet wan face.

‘Thank God for that. Lord, I be willing to give

my treasure unto Thy holy keeping,' said John, his voice hoarse with anguish, but firm still in faith, feeling even in this trouble God was love. But Martha could only weep bitterly. A change passed over the little face, strong convulsions came on for a few moments, then gradually the struggle ceased. At length, as the breath grew fainter, there came one sigh soft as angel's breath, and the spirit of little Faith passed from earth to heaven. In one moment the white robe, the golden crown, and harp, were hers. The lamb was at rest on the bosom of the good Shepherd. On earth the little dead form only remained on the loving father's breast, but he knew that his darling was safe and blessed for ever. Long it was ere Martha could persuade herself that all was over, she kept still on her knees, by the little form she had loved so well; while tears slowly trickled down her husband's face, and fell on the golden hair that rested on his arm.

'Martha, don't take on so, honey. The Lord has purvided some'ut better for t' lile lass,' said Betty, who had hitherto remained silent.

'True, Betty, and we mun say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the

Lord,'" replied John; and as he spoke he rose, and gently laid the dead baby on her bed, while Martha, waving Betty away, with her own hands laid the dear little form out upon it, nor would she suffer Betty to assist her, taking an agonised sort of pleasure even in combing out her lovely golden curls, and laying them on the pillow, John and Betty standing by in sorrowful silence.

'Aye, my baby, but don't she look like an angel?' she said, sobbing, when she had finished and was looking at the marble-like little face, with its dimpled little hands clasped over its bosom.

'And she be one now, Martha, beautifuller nor this, for her blue eyes is open, and her lips rosy, and she be happy with the Lord,' said Betty.

'Aye, aye, I know it, but I can't feel it yet,' she said, bursting into fresh tears. Poor John, feeling more than he dare show, for his wife's sake left the room, and shut himself up until he grew calmer.

## CHAPTER X.

' I shine in the light of God,  
 His likeness stamps my brow ;  
 Through the shadows of death my feet have trod,  
 And I reign in glory now !

I have learnt the song they sing,  
 Whom Jesus hath set free ;  
 And the glorious walls of heaven still ring  
 With my new-born melody.'

*Christian Lyrics.*

IT was well for Martha that Hope's loud calls from the kitchen roused her to think of the living child. He had waked and found himself in bed in the kitchen alone, and he soon exerted his voice in showing he did not like it. How the poor weeping woman hugged him to her breast, and rained tears upon her boy, while she told him that in the night God's angels had been and carried his little sister's spirit to heaven.

' Then I don't love God ! ' was the passionate exclama-

tion, when Hope understood at last that his little sister would never speak to him again, and he broke out into wild sobs and cries.

‘Nay, nay, my jewel, you mustn’t say that; God knows best,’ replied Martha, though she was too heartstricken to comfort or set the boy right; and she sat rocking him in the arm-chair, trying to still his cries, while he called God ‘naughty and unkind,’ almost unheeded.

Hope was like many older and wiser people than he, who when trouble comes do not see why God sends it. They rebel against the sorrow, and the loving Father’s hand, who afflicts for His children’s good. Years after, when Hope was a man, and looked back on his early defiance of God, he felt thankful that he now knew that God was not unkind, and that in love his little darling sister had been taken from this troublesome world to the land of everlasting rest, where tears are wiped from all eyes, where pain and suffering cannot come. Perhaps in *words* poor Martha did not rebel as the boy did, but she could not say, ‘Thy will be done.’ By-and-by John came down-stairs, hearing Hope’s wild cries and Martha’s feeble efforts at comfort.

Very gently the good man spoke : ‘ Eh, Martha, my dear lass, art thou angry with God Almighty, because He has taken our bonny little lass to one of His mansions? It’s hard to flesh and blood, honey ; but our little dear’s name should teach us a lesson. We must have faith, Martha, to look beyond the dark valley of the shadow of death, to the bright shores beyond. Don’t you mind, when I was reading the little book to the dear children about the young woman in the “ Infants’ Progress,” whose baby was taken from her, how the kind Shepherd lent her the glass of faith and telled her to look through it, and how first, by reason of her tears, she could not see ; howsoever, when she wiped um away, she seed her little one among the blessed, all happy and bright, and she went on her way rejoicing?’

Martha could not at first speak for her tears, and John continued,—

‘ God has left us this little lad—our little Hope--Martha. If Faith is in heaven, Hope is here ; if we have one there and one here, we’se not be all for earth, Martha.’

‘ Aye, aye, I know, John, dear, but it’s hard. Oh,

it's hard. I cannot say "Thy will be done" yet awhile. To think we've heard for the last time that dear little voice a-singing,—

'There is a 'appy land far, far away,'

and now she's landed there hersel,' said Martha.

'There 'll be no *last* time in heaven, dear heart, and when we hear her there a-singing the new song ourselves, we shall bless the Lord for her and us,' said John.

'Maybe t' angels heard her a-singing so sweet on earth, and wanted her for their choir up above,' said Martha, as if gleaning some sort of comfort from the idea, and John did not contradict her.

By-and-by Martha roused herself, dressed Hope, and gave him his breakfast, while John prepared his master's. He hardly knew how to carry the things into the dining-room, and his hand shook so much when he set down the coffee-pot that Mr. Ramsden looked keenly at him through his spectacles.

'Anything wrong, John?' he asked.

John for the first time fairly broke down and sobbed.

'Poor fellow! what is the matter?' said the old man,

much distressed, laying his withered hand on that of his faithful servant's.

'I ask your pardon, sir, for this,' said John, wiping his eyes. 'It be our little Faith, sir; she be gone away from us.'

'Gone away! Where, John? I don't understand.'

'To heaven, master. She died early this morning.'

'Eh! What! that nice little lassie that brought my slippers? Dead! Surely not! When was she taken ill? What did she die of?' inquired Mr. Ramsden, much shocked.

'The doctor called it dipthery, sir. Her throat was that bad she choked almost, and then she took a fit and went off gradual, sir, quite like a lamb, a following the Good Shepherd's call, sir; but me, and Martha, and Hope, is a'most heart-broke.'

'I am very sorry, John. Dear, I am very sorry. John, you've been a faithful servant. Is there anything I can do for you?' said the old man earnestly.

'Nothink just now, thank you kindly, sir. Enow perhaps I would like to ask you about—about the funeral; I mun get o'er it a bit first,' said poor John, with faltering voice.

The old gentleman took no breakfast that day, save his cup of coffee. He stayed in-doors too, and much of the day he sat still, looking into the fire.

How they got through the time in the kitchen John and Martha hardly knew, only that Hope cried so incessantly that he made himself quite ill, and Martha's whole time was taken up with attending to him, and at night he slept in her arms. John took down the Bible in the evening as usual, and though his voice trembled, he read the few verses from 2 Kings, iv. 26, about the Shunammite woman whose little child died, and her going to the prophet Elisha ; and when the man of God asked, ‘ Is it well with the child ? ’ she answered in the full assurance of faith, ‘ It is well.’

‘ Eh, but, John, there arn’t no *Lishas* now to go to, or I’d go about my bonny one,’ said Martha piteously.

‘ Dear heart, thou art fair dazed\* wi’ grief. Wouldst thou reely wish our little one back ? I fear thou wouldst not have said if *’Lisha* had asked thee that it is well wi’ the child,’ said John tenderly.

Martha’s lip quivered, and large tears fell on sleeping Hope’s rosy cheek.

\* Stupefied.

' Maybe not yet, John. I feel like *maddled\** wi' sorrow,' she said.

Then John knelt down and said a short prayer in his own homely Yorkshire words, that he and his wife might in much submission be taught to bend to God's will, and feel and know that ' He doeth all things well.'

John and Martha decided to bury their little Faith in their own native place, twenty miles away, and where they too hoped to be buried when they died. It was the same place where but a few days before they had intended to send the little ones ; now one must go only a lifeless body to its last earthly resting-place, until the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, and the holy dead shall rise to meet the Lord in the air, when He cometh in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead. Ere the coffin-lid was closed they took Hope to see his little sister, but the boy shrunk from the cold touch, saying, ' That are not my Fafe, my 'ittle sissy. She are warm, and have red cheeks ;' and they thought they had better have let him only remember her in her winsome bonni-ness and life. Over the hills and moors, where the sweet

\* Bewildered.

fresh breezes blew, far away from the smoke and the dirty town, they took little Faith's dead body to the quiet churchyard,—standing apart from the small village in a pleasant valley, where the murmuring of a little brook over the stones, the singing of birds, and bleating of sheep on the hills, were all the sounds that generally broke the stillness around. There they laid their darling in 'sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection,' earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, sorrowing not as those that have no hope; and afterwards joining in the words, 'We meekly beseech Thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin to a life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Him, as our hope of this our sister doth.\* Martha's grief was somewhat calmer, but her heart was very sore yet, still she was praying earnestly for the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and trying from her heart to feel that it was well with her darling, now and evermore. They had left Hope at John's sister's, Mrs. Abbot's, not knowing how he might be excited if he saw where they put his sister, Martha intending after gradually to explain

\* Burial-service.

things to him. They found him childlike, his tears dried, busy gathering daisies on the fresh green grass, for few indeed were the flowers he had ever seen. He had a new idea, too, that Faith had only gone on a visit to heaven, and that by-and-by she would return, and they would play together once more.

Martha was to remain a week at Mrs. Abbot's with Hope, while John returned to his master. The change did her much good, and during that time she tried in her own homely way to teach Hope the truths respecting the soul and body; how, though the latter was laid in the cold grave, the former had gone to God in heaven, and of the time when the body shall be united to the soul and reign with the Lord Jesus for ever. Martha had brought some plants of lilies of the valley, violets, and forget-me-nots, to plant round the little grave, and she took Hope with her while she put them in, and Hope would call it 'Fafe's 'ittle garden,' and how pleased she would be when she rose again to see 'de pitty fowers.'

When Martha returned she left Hope with her kind sister-in-law for a few weeks longer, to gather some roses in his cheeks before he returned to Harden. When she came back she found Mr. Ramsden had been talking to

John, and wishing to be at the expense of a tomb-stone for little Faith's grave, and John had waited until his wife returned to see what design she would most like.

Faith's love of the good Shepherd suggested a carving of the Saviour with a lamb in his arms. Along with the name and the age John chose the text, 'He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom ;' and when he first named the verse Martha said, 'And now, John, my dear Saviour has taught me to bow to His will, may the words be added, think you also ? "Is it well with the child ?—It is well." ' Not without a sigh and sob did good Martha speak, but it was from her heart. And this was why on little Faith's tombstone there were *two* texts instead of one.

## CHAPTER XI.

‘A child’s kiss,  
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad ;  
A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich ;  
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong ;  
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense  
Of service which thou renderest.’

E. B. BROWNING.

FROM the time of little Faith’s death Mr. Ramsden seemed to take greater interest in Hope, and he frequently had him with him in the evenings; and Hope, who had little or no shyness, was always ready to shout loud enough in the old man’s ear, and tell him the hymns he had been learning. And so another four years past on during which time Hope had continued to attend the National School. He had grown a fine, healthy boy, strong and daring, and showed more than ordinary talent. Besides reading, writing, and arithmetic, he had learnt

history and geography, such as the master could teach him, for in those days National schoolmasters were not expected to teach *everything* as they are now-a-days ; and I think they managed to instruct the children in consequence better than the masters whose heads are crammed so full of knowledge. Hope being eight years old, it suddenly occurred to Mr. Ramsden that he had learnt as much at the National School as he was likely to do ; and as he was a very sharp boy, it seemed a pity he should not go where he could learn more. Accordingly Mr. Ramsden called John and Martha into consultation, and it was decided that Hope should forthwith become a pupil at the Grammar School, any expenses for the same Mr. Ramsden agreeing to pay. This was a great rise for the boy, and his adopted parents were proud and pleased indeed, and ambitious thoughts at least filled Martha's heart, that in time he might rise to be a gentleman. Mr. Ramsden had not, however, then any very grand idea for Hope, but intended after a few years to take him as a clerk in his own mill, or obtain a situation for him with a friend. The master of the Grammar School, who was a clever, far-seeing man, soon singled out Hope as a boy fitted for higher things, and

voluntarily took especial pains with him. Hope had lost much of his childish thoughtlessness, and though he was first and foremost in all boyish games, he was even at an early age anxious to raise himself. Never had the idea wholly left him of being a clergyman, and as he grew older he gave his mind to acquiring knowledge with a perseverance which, considering his mirthful nature, was astonishing. Proud indeed were John and Martha when Hope each half-year brought home his prizes, and also so good an account of his conduct. At length Mr. Ramsden, who was not very quick at seeing youthful talent, perceived that Hope was worthy of a higher lot in life than he had designed for him. At fifteen Hope was a well-mannered handsome boy, a universal favourite with his schoolfellows, to whose houses he was constantly invited, and an especial favourite with his master. He had become, too, a great comfort to old Mr. Ramsden, whose increasing infirmities rendered him still more helpless, and less able to amuse himself. Each evening Hope read to him, and now it became a settled thing that the Bible always formed a part of the reading.

The religion of John and Martha had not been lost upon Hope. John's instructions (homely though they

were) had fallen on good ground, and in the declining years of the old gentleman the young boy became his help and teacher in the knowledge of sacred things. Every Sunday Mr. Ramsden, in spite of his blindness and bad hearing, might be seen entering God's house leaning on the arm of the fair, curly-headed boy's shoulder for support.

In fact, Hope was like a grandson to him, while he never failed in dutiful attention and respect for those kind, good people who had, indeed, been parents to him. It was only when he reached the age of fifteen that he learned the strange circumstances under which he and his twin sister had been adopted by John and Martha. The revelation had the effect of producing an increased gravity in Hope, and an intense longing and desire to know, whether his parents, and especially his mother, were still alive; and from that time he never omitted to ask God day by day that his wishes might be realised. So attached had old Mr. Ramsden become to Hope, that the boy's future prospects might have been quite overlooked had not his attention been called to the necessity of doing something more for him. The master of the Grammar School, however, saw the state of things, and resolved to

make an effort for his favourite pupil's sake. He therefore took the opportunity of seeing Mr. Ramsden, and laying before him the desirableness of sending Hope to some first-rate school, and afterwards to college. He told him of Hope's rare character and abilities, and how he had confided to him the earnest desire of his heart to become a clergyman ; and the struggles which the boy had made not to name this to his adopted parents, or the old gentleman, knowing that the former could not afford to do more for him than they had done, nor would he think of wishing to receive anything further from Mr. Ramsden, to whom he was already so much indebted.

'Brave lad ! But I always thought he was,' exclaimed Mr. Ramsden, warmly, when Dr. Chambers had finished his statement about Hope.

'I quite agree with you, sir, and I think our Church should not lose so noble a son as a minister,' replied Dr Chambers.

'It shall be done. Though I grieve to part with the dear lad,' was Mr. Ramsden's rejoinder. So it was all arranged. And though Martha's heart's desire was to be realised, she felt the separation from her boy most keenly, and she shed some bitter tears when he left them for a

school near London, where he was to be prepared for completing his career at the University of Oxford. Her grand wish *now* was to live to see him not only a Christian gentleman, but that God would grant that she and John might hear him preach the Gospel; and then she felt they would both be ready to say with Simeon of old, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.'

After Hope's departure, Mr. Ramsden insisted on important changes being made; he felt his faithful servants must now be more with him, their working-days must end, and others take their place; and homely companions though they were, they were a great comfort to him, tending him in his declining health with true devotion, and in their simple faith and trust in God leading him on more and more to fix his thoughts on that better country whither he was fast hastening. Hope came home regularly for his holidays to Ramsden House, and you may be sure his return was hailed with true delight. And it was such a comfort, too, to find that his good fortune had not spoilt him. He was the same frank, open youth, that he had been as a child; and his affection for John and Martha unchanged. Tenderly, as of old, he would kiss Martha's cheek (now losing its freshness with

advancing years), or stroke her silvery hair gently, and call her by the honoured name of ‘Mother.’ To John he was ever respectful, just ‘as if I was a gentleman born and bred,’ John would say.

And Mr. Ramsden clung more than ever to the young man, though by reason of the dimness of his sight he could hardly see him. So time went on, and Hope passed from school to college with credit to himself and his benefactors, for he was the child of many prayers, and the blessing of God rested upon him in all he did.

## CHAPTER XII.

'Sow ye beside all waters, with a blessing and a prayer;  
Name Him whose hands uphold thee, and sow ye everywhere.  
Work while the daylight lasteth, ere the shades of night come on,  
Ere the Lord of the vineyard cometh, and the labourer's work is done.'

AND now that day had come for which John and Martha had so earnestly longed. Hope, their own bright boy, was ordained; and was coming to preach his first sermon in that very pulpit where, in his infant days, he had first heard the truth proclaimed, and which even then he had fondly desired to occupy. Who would have recognised in the fair, slight, earnest-looking young clergyman who entered the pulpit that evening, the rosy, chubby, little, mischievous Hope, of days gone by, who used to stand restlessly on the seat of the pew, and think strange thoughts about the choir boys, singing. Perhaps a thought of it passed through Hope's mind

as he gave out his text, and saw his adopted parents and Mr. Ramsden seated only a few pews from him. But childish remembrances fled away in his earnest desire to proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus. 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance' (Luke, v. 31), were the words which he gave out, in his full, clear voice, as his text. And what a sermon followed! Those who heard it only knew. None could leave the church that night and say they had not heard the Saviour's salvation in all its fulness and freeness. It was a sermon to draw sinners lost and ruined back to the fold of the Good Shepherd, and to strengthen those who already knew and followed Him. Conviction must have reached every one that what the preacher said were words from his very heart. There was no coldness or languor in his manner, and so his words went home to the souls of other people, striking them as a ball direct from the cannon's mouth. His soul was filled with living fire; and the fire of holiness was kindled likewise in many a heart. One thing, too, was a great advantage to Hope; his distinct and melodious voice. Every word was heard with thrilling clearness. And when he ceased, I think I may safely tell you even the little children were not tired.

John's honest face bore token of calm gratitude to God for His mercy to his 'dear lad ;' but Martha's handkerchief was often applied to her eyes, to wipe away the gushing tears of joy which kept rushing into her eyes ; while poor old Mr. Ramsden, who, though he could not hear, had realised much from the text which had been shown to him, thanked God that he had been the instrument of enabling Hope to stand that night to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But there was one man whose eyes had never left the preacher's face in the church that night. A tall man, with piercing black eyes and iron grey hair. And had the preacher thought only of himself, he might have been disconcerted ; for wherever he turned he felt those eyes upon him, and a strange sort of thrill passed over him more than once, for which he could not account.

The service over, Hope joined his friends, giving his arm to old Mr. Ramsden, as in his boyhood's days.

' My lad,' the old man said, when they were out of the church, ' this is the happiest day in my life. I could not see you, nor could hear you well, but I seemed to feel it all, and I thank God for the grace He has given you. For myself, I am near my journey's end now, and

the time is fast coming when “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped” (Isa. xxxv. 5), for I “know in whom I have believed;” and let this be your comfort, Hope, that *your* voice has been the earthly sound which first led the old man’s wandering steps in the way to his heavenly home.’

Hope’s heart was too full to speak. He could only tenderly press the old man’s hand that rested on his arm. And then they all entered the house.

Once more, as my story draws to a close, Martha was startled by the ringing of the front-door bell, at an hour when visitors were not wont to come to the house. This time, when John opened the door, a gentleman’s voice inquired for Mr. Hope Benson, and if he could see him. John ushered him into the empty drawing-room, and leaving the candle on the table, was about to retire, when the gentleman asked him if he could tell him anything of Mr. Hope Benson’s early history. John was taken by surprise, but, not liking to relate the peculiar circumstances of his infant-life, told him Mr. Hope could tell him anything he liked if he thought proper to do so, and withdrew.

Hope remained some time alone with the stranger,

now and then his deep, earnest voice, and that of his companion, were heard in conversation by the wondering people in the dining-room.

In the stranger Hope instantly recognised the man whose eyes had been so intently fixed upon him while he was preaching. I doubt not you will guess who he was : the long-lost father of Hope and Faith. The matter was not long in being cleared up, and then the repentant father humbled himself to his son, and told him his history ; which I must tell you in very few words.

He had been a wild, bad young man, who, as I already told you, had ill-treated his wife, and deserted her and her babies. She had joined him in Portsmouth, well-nigh broken-hearted and starved to death, but steadily refusing to tell him what she had done with the twins, except that they had found a happy home. Soon after the vessel sailed, and the severe sea-sickness which followed reduced the poor woman so much that she sunk away and died long ere they reached Australia. The father (Tom Ranford) was sobered and saddened, and became a wiser, but not a better man in the sense of serving God. He was prosperous in his life, and his heart

yearned after his children. He wrote to all his poor wife's relations that he knew, but they could give him no information respecting them. Twice in twenty years he had come to England and tried to find his children, and returned sadder than ever to go on making money, for which he did not care. At length he finally resolved to settle in England, and sooner spend his last sixpence than not find his son and daughter.

Providence led him, the day after his arrival, to Mr. Bosworth's church, and no sooner had Hope ascended the pulpit, and the full glare of the gas-light fell on his face, than he recognised his son, from his remarkable resemblance to his mother; this, added to information previously given that Hope was merely an adopted child of the Bensons, furnished him with almost certain proof.

And what had been the father's feelings when, from the lips of his own son, he heard such a soul-stirring, powerful appeal to sinners, weary and heavy laden, to come and find rest? *He* was weary and heart-sore, but he had not found rest; he did not realise that God would blot out all the wickedness of his past life, especially his cruelty to his faithful wife and unknown children. And

now it was God who caused his long-lost son to pour the oil of joy and peace into his heart, and to bring the blessed conviction to his mind that his sins, which were many, were all forgiven. So it proved that the first-fruit of Hope's ministry was his own father.

Long the father and son sat, their hands clasping one another in deep and heartfelt joy, until at last Hope remembered that his presence would be missed, and he hastened to take his father in and present him to John and Martha, as well as their old master. Fervent, indeed, were the blessings Mr. Ranford prayed might be theirs for all their goodness to his dear son. They were truly a happy party, and we are sure the blessing of God rested upon them, and His peace filled their souls.

I have not much more to tell you. Mr. Ranford of course settled in Harden, and his son lived with him while curate to Mr. Bosworth, though much of his time was spent with his dear old friends in the house near the mill, so long as they continued there. But within a few months, Mr. Ramsden, full of years and infirmities, rejoicing in God's love, died; and then John and Martha, for whom he had made ample provision in their old age,

retired to their own native place where little Faith was buried, and by whose side they too hope to be laid when death shall call them to the better country.

I think you will agree with me, that John and Martha had always adorned their lives by living in the constant exercise of the three Christian graces, Faith, Hope, and Love. They had lived a life of Faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ's salvation, relying only on His blood for pardon and peace.

They were ever full of Hope, in believing it was their soul's anchor, sure and steadfast when tossed on the waves of this troublesome world; and the Bible says, 'We are saved by hope,' such hope as John and Martha had. Last of all, I am sure they had that true abiding Charity, love to God and man, which made their lives so beautiful, though only plain and simple people in this world's learning. Theirs was the true Charity, which is the greatest of all the Christian graces, for when Faith shall be lost in sight, and there shall be nothing left to Hope for, Charity shall still last for ever in God's presence in heaven.

'Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.' (1 Cor. xiii. 13.)

'Father of lights ! these gifts impart  
To mine and every human heart.  
Faith, that in prayer can never fail;  
Hope, that o'er doubting must prevail;  
And Charity, whose name above  
Is God's own name, for God is love.'

J. MONTGOMERY.

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